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POINTS OF VIEW



Photo H. G. Harrell

Sincerely
Dr Austin.

POINTS of VIEW

By

L. F. AUSTIN

Edited with a Prefatory Note by

CLARENCE ROOK

and a Photogravure Portrait

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PREFATORY NOTE

LOUIS Frederic Austin was a Londoner—a Londoner of the West End, the theatres, the clubs, the restaurants, the dinner-parties—and the periodicals. In spite of his Irish parenthood (for he was son of Captain Thomas Austin of Dublin), and in spite of his American nativity (for he was born in Brooklyn on October 9, 1852), he was a Londoner. And whenever he took a holiday in his later years, it was at Brighton, at Ostend—some place suggestive of the happy swirl of the pavement that he loved. For just thirty years of his fifty-three he was a Londoner, though the Merchant Taylors' School at Great Crosby, near Liverpool, set him on the way to literature and London. When those thirty years were over he died—suddenly—appropriately—at the Hôtel Métropole, Brighton—in evening dress. So, I think, my friend would have chosen to die—suddenly—without fuss or turmoil—when the banquet of life was over—in his proper garb of a gentleman. . . .

During those thirty years L. F. Austin was part and parcel of London. In the early days

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he acted as an informal private secretary to the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, and even then his association with Henry Irving justified him in writing a biography of the actor, though it did not justify him in signing himself anything but Frederic Daly. The association with Irving continued, and the busy actor, called upon for speeches and addresses, usually consulted Austin as to the framing of the picture he was to set before his audience. For Austin gradually developed the ready wit that sets the table in a roar, and for years he was acknowledged as one of the best after-dinner speakers in London.

His industry and fertility were amazing. Those who knew him only as the writer of "Our Note Book" in the *Illustrated London News*, as the "Jaques" of "The Passing Mood" in the *Daily Chronicle*, as the *causeur* "At Random" of the *Sketch*, or as the weekly contributor of "Points of View" to the Manchester *Daily Dispatch*, have no idea of the immense amount of work he poured into the press week by week. For long we shared a room at the *Daily Chronicle* office, and night by night he wrote a leading article. Almost by accident I learned that night by night he wrote another leading article for a syndicate

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that supplied the provincial press. In the years during which I knew him well, when we walked and talked together, and shared that room in the newspaper office, his physical life seemed to be bounded by Ludgate Circus on the east, and Hyde Park Corner on the west, though his intellectual sympathies took fanciful flights. In the forenoon he would walk to the Reform Club, write and lunch, and write again in the quietest room available. . . . A strenuous worker filled with enthusiasm . . . there was never such an enthusiast as Austin on the brink of a leading article . . . a worker who hides his work, as the conjurer does, under an assumption of ease, and that assumption makes the charm of Austin's work.

Unfortunately, his work was mainly ephemeral; he never had the leisure to write a book since the "Henry Irving" by Frederic Daly, which was published two-and-twenty years ago. But he had his audience, and one night, as we drove westward together from Fleet Street, the underlying seriousness of Austin struck me. I had thrown out a hint as to the number of people who had listened to some preacher of the moment. "Five thousand!" exclaimed Austin; "why a million people will read me

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to-morrow morning, and God forgive me if I've made a mistake!"

Only a small and dainty volume, entitled "At Random," and published some ten years ago, remains the permanent record of Austin's work. This consisted of papers previously published in the *Speaker* and the *Sketch*. The preface to that little volume suggests the point of view that his editor and friend has taken. There occurs this passage :—

"A journalist who has given much of his time to the solemn recitation of facts in unwilling ears, who rattles the bones of statistics over the stones of public opinion, may take his fill now and then of whimsical fantasy by way of recreation."

Here we get the real L. F. Austin—the essayist of wide information, of large sympathies, with humorous eyes and a knowledge of the value of words set one against the other; the literary conjurer who can toss two contradictory statements into the air, spin them, and catch them upon the point of a pen until the eye becomes dizzy with amused delight . . .

To many—to the publisher of this volume

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first of all—it occurred to demand a reprint of some of those fantastical toyings with the great verities and the little absurdities. The selection now presented is drawn mainly from the *Daily Chronicle* of London and the *Daily Dispatch* of Manchester. And the paper which is placed at the end—the last, I believe, that he wrote—is typical of the man. We talked it over in his chambers in Jermyn Street. He amused me much with his description of gout. I laughed, without suspecting that he was poking fun into the ribs of death.

One or two papers have been extracted from the files of the *Morning Leader*, and the opening article appeared in the *North American Review*. It was ordered and written in anticipation of Sir Henry Irving's visit to America this year. The proofs were in Austin's room when he was found dead at Brighton. By the time the article was published, Irving and Austin, close friends in life, were together "beyond these voices."

It should be added that these papers have, with scarcely an exception, been taken as written. Here and there a word or two must go—an allusion that would be unintelligible when the morrow is taking thought of the things of itself. They are journalism, prompted

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by the impulse and inspiration of the moment. But they are journalism at its best—the suggestive comment of a sane and humorous man on the day's happening.

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I—*Sir Henry Irving*¹

ONE night last June, the walls of Drury Lane Theatre resounded with such acclamations as that old playhouse has seldom heard in all its history. A solitary figure stood in front of the curtain, listening with a grave smile to the enthusiasm which seemed to have no end. It was Sir Henry Irving taking leave of the London playgoers on the last night of his season, a season made memorable at every performance by scenes very similar to this. "You are all very young," he said, when the audience would let him speak; and, indeed, to a veteran actor, near the end of his career, the youth of this vast assemblage must have been singularly gratifying. Every night Drury Lane had been thronged with young people. The younger generation had knocked at the doors in a sense quite different from that of Ibsen's famous saying. They had come in thousands,

¹ This article was completed by Mr. Austin but a few days before his sudden death, and was written in the expectation that it would be published, as originally intended, on the occasion of the late Sir Henry Irving's projected visit to the United States in 1906.

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not to tell the old actor that his day was done, that his methods were outworn, that he must yield his sceptre to another, but to swear fealty to him, to crown him with fresh laurels, to thunder his praises with passionate emotion.

Thus spoke Drury Lane. It carried some of us back to the days when we also were young, when this actor was carving his way to fame, and when we clamoured our best to help him. From 1905 my memory retraced the course of time to 1873, the year when I was first a pittite at the Old Lyceum. How we jammed the pit to see Irving as Eugene Aram! As a haunted murderer, he had made his great success in "The Bells": here was another in the same line. In the first act, he was the melancholy wooer of the parson's daughter in the peaceful vicarage; in the second, the bones of his victim were exhumed, and he shrank from looking on them; in the third, he confessed his crime to the girl in the churchyard, and enacted it over again with tremendous effect. The victim, of course, had been a most unworthy person; we pittites could see that with half an eye; the displacement of his bones was a provoking accident, but for which the vicarage romance would have run quite smoothly. Irving threw such passion into the

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enactment of the murder before the terrified Ruth, that we were thrilled with sympathy. We gloried in being accessories after the fact.

Later came "Philip," another haunted-criminal play, wherein a Spanish gentleman of fiery temper shot his brother after much provocation. Over the dead man's face the remorseful Cain reverently drew his cloak, and then stole guiltily away, followed by our vehement plaudits. He who knows not what it is to revel in deeds of blood on the stage, when they are done with distinction, and when the doer carries about with him an abiding sorrow that makes him a romantic figure, has a poor experience of life's pleasures. Philip had not slain his brother after all. That graceless person turned up again, and made love to Philip's wife. Suspicious of some intruder on the premises, the jealous husband ordered the doorway of the room where his brother was in hiding to be walled up, when lo! a repentant apparition, eager to affirm that a brother's blood had not been shed, or, at any rate, that enough remained to justify a fraternal embrace. It was not a very good play; its note was not particularly fresh; still, the imagination of the actor, his sovereign quality,

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presented the idea of the haunted man with undiminished glamour.

But what of his future? Some critics predicted it freely enough, to the indignation of us youngsters in the pit, who glowered at all the bald heads in the stalls, suspecting that every man with no hair to speak of wrote like a cynic in the papers. He was a very good comedian, said those critics of Henry Irving; witness his Digby Grant in "Two Roses"; that eccentric old gentleman who supposed that delicacy of feeling could be rewarded with "a little cheque." He was a good melodramatic actor; witness Mathias, and so forth. His *Charles I.* was not melodrama, to be sure; the critics did not know exactly what it was; they admitted, however, that it was a picturesque character, full of dignity and tenderness. But we were not to imagine, for one moment, that the actor who had done these things could succeed in the dear old "legitimate." That was reserved for tragedians who belonged to a "school"; whose style had broadened slowly down from precedent to precedent; whose elocution rolled on like Byron's ocean; who had no angularities of deportment, like the ambitious gentleman at the Lyceum; who gave you Nature in her majestic mood, with

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an imperious roar and an earth-shaking stamp. These old tragedians loomed chiefly in our fancy and in the annals of the stage, for their school was no longer on the scene. But Phelps was still alive ; the august shade of Macready was not too remote for a critic with a bald head ; and, when the audacious Irving appeared as Richelieu, the sheeted dead, you might say, did squeak and gibber in the London streets.

What a "first night" that was in 1873 ! I can still see the bald heads growing crimson. They remembered Richelieu, a very different personage from this presumptuous innovator. We had never seen Richelieu before, but had a triumphant assurance that here was the very man. Excellent figure of the "legitimate," this Cardinal of Bulwer's ! Was ever such wiliness, broad, under-scored, capital-lettered, so plain that owls might see it by day ? But, to be sure, Irving's wiliness was not broad enough for the critics who had memories. Hitherto he had been his own standard ; he was now at grips with the Past. Is it ever easy for the old playgoer to hail the merit of the new actor, playing the familiar parts with unfamiliar method, with new and disturbing insight ? We associate the characters of the drama, the characters that really live, with

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some personality of the stage who has made a lasting impress on the imagination.

When, at length, Henry Irving came to play Hamlet, it was a far more serious affair than Bulwer. Cradled in melodrama, his ambition aspired to the lawful line of succession in Shakespearian acting, as though he had been born in the purple. It was not so much that he offended the memory of some particular Hamlet. But Hamlet was a classic, shrined in tradition, guarded by the embattled phalanx of the old school. Here was an actor who put life into the revered abstraction, made the heart of its mystery glow with a romantic flame, interpreted the play of intellect and the depth of passion with equal mastery; and was, in fine, the veritable Hamlet, in his dignity, his melancholy, his humour, his blasting irony, in all that was lovable in his nature.

I have seen lots of Hamlets since. I have sat in a theatre where the partisans of the Hamlet then upon the scene, and the partisans of some other Hamlet fortunately absent, have almost come to blows. I have known friendships chilled, and hearths made desolate, by the factions of the inky cloak. Anybody may be Othello or Macbeth without breaking up our happy homes; but do you dare, sir, to

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maintain that the Hamlet you admire is to be mentioned in the same hemisphere with the glorious being who trod the battlements at Elsinore when I was a boy? Then have at you, sir! This is why I do not enumerate those other Hamlets. But to my thinking, I have seen only one inspired Hamlet, only one actor who was born Hamlet; the rest have worn the inky cloak and the dejected haviour of the visage; but none of them could say with conviction: "I know not seems."

This may stir up anathema in some quarters; and I should be rather glad if it did, for the present generation is in peril of a declining taste for theatrical controversy. Whenever Irving essayed Shakespeare anew, the battle raged as fiercely as ever. Macbeth, now—ah! the first night of his Macbeth; that was something like a tourney. There was a little piece before the tragedy; the queer old custom of prefacing Shakespeare with a farce, as if to fortify our spirits, was not yet dead. None of us had ever seen Macbeth; and we beheld him now as a murderer, a conscience-stricken ghost-seer, who plucks up his soldierly nerve only in the last act; in a word, the haunted criminal of the early Irving play. His martial deeds were talked about; but, until he re-

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solved to die with harness on his back, you would never have thought he had the spirit of a warrior. The enemy blasphemed like anything; they said that Shakespeare never drew such a craven; Macbeth was a lion-hearted man, who could not have made this pitiful spectacle after Duncan's murder, his knees knocking together with abject fright. Macbeth was an heroic part; was this the heroic way of playing it? We had our misgivings; it sounded so natural that heroes should be represented heroically. But was that Shakespeare's view? Heavens! how we read our Shakespeare, and set what the "bleeding sergeant" says of Macbeth's prowess on the battlefield against the deadly insults to his manhood from the lips of his wife! Irving's conception was right; and Macbeth, a bloody-minded villain with a turn for poetry and philosophy, and a paralysing dread of ghosts—"Take any shape but that!"—must be deposed from his heroic state.

Of course, you must not insist too strongly on the meaning of Shakespeare, even when you know what he does mean. Salvini's Othello, who dragged Desdemona about by the hair in the mad frenzy of a jealous animal, was scarcely the Othello of Shakespeare, calm and sacrificial.

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But he was a prodigy of superb force. Fanny Kemble, when she saw Irving play Shylock, is reported to have said: "If Shakespeare could see this, he would rewrite the part." If the Shylock of the early stage tradition was the Shylock that Shakespeare did see, the comic Jew in a red wig and a false nose, he could not have been very sensitive about the acting of his characters. The dramatist who created Portia and Rosalind, and saw them played by boys, must have been content with strange illusions. The low comedian, as Shylock with red hair, tickled the groundlings, who had not the faintest suspicion that Shakespeare had made out the strongest vindication of the Jews against their persecutors. Did nobody in his day listen to Shylock's fierce irony with an inkling of the truth? "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you wrong us, shall we not revenge?" The Jewish answer to Christian villainy was to "better the instruction"; hence the famous bond, a pound of Antonio's fair flesh. Perhaps the absurdity of a contract, wherein a subtle and crafty Jew was made to overreach himself so grossly, was the poet's concession to contemporary prejudice. Perhaps it never struck him that no man, least of all Shylock, could imagine that the law of

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Venice or any other state would allow him to exact such a forfeit from a debtor. When Portia condescends to come to the point, it is not her silly juggle about the shedding of one drop of blood that determines the cause; it is the obvious argument that no Jew, under any bond whatever, can be allowed to contrive against the life of a citizen. If cutting a pound of flesh off a gentleman's person is not contriving against his life, what is it? Imagine a Duke of Venice to whom this had to be pointed out! Shakespeare did not care; he took the story as he found it; and he had his recompense, perhaps, in the delight with which the populace greeted the discomfiture of the droll comedian with the preposterous nose and the inflamed wig. The trial scene must have been very humorous in those far-off days, when the serio-comic brutality of the Jew was outwitted by a lively boy making believe to be a young woman masquerading as a Junior Counsel of the Padua Bar, and instructing an incredibly ignorant Venetian Magistrate in the elements of law and common sense. The rigours of the fun, I dare say, were mitigated as time went on, when the Jew became less grotesque, and Portia was really a woman, though rather a pompous

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lady, as pompous as Fanny Kemble herself. With Henry Irving as Shylock, and Ellen Terry as Portia, the course of evolution was complete. It was not in the malignity of his premature triumph that Shylock was great; it was in the splendour of his ruin, in the pathos of the broken old man tottering from the court. The Victorian playgoer sat in awe at the very moment of the story when the Elizabethan playgoer had burst into rude rejoicing.

"The Merchant of Venice" has been the chief monument of twenty brilliant years of Irving's management at the Lyceum. The dear old "legitimate" had a splendid home; and the friends of its palmy days, who had wept for its decline, began to cheer up a little, although they shook their heads at the scenery. People, it was said, went to the Lyceum to look at the scenery, and not at the acting. Heaven knows what takes some persons to the theatre; it is certainly not the play. You cannot tell why others buy books; it is not to read them. But vast numbers who had held aloof from theatres in earlier times flocked to the Lyceum, because they found so much there to gratify an intelligent taste. What Henry Irving did most notably was to bring serious

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people back to the acted drama. The mind that shaped every detail of a production, and brought the beauty of scenic effect into harmony with the comedy that was enacted at Venice or Messina, knew the secret of the grand style. Stage-carpenters had erected imposing structures elsewhere without captivating the public; but these were structures with no artistic suggestion to give them atmosphere. It was distinction that reigned on the Lyceum stage, not expenditure. You had the life and colour of Bassanio's world, with Shylock's grim dwelling in the Ghetto over the bridge, so strongly in the memory that, in Venice, the whole scene came back to you; and the bridge itself, with the sculptured faces of a humorously Semitic cast, under which you pass from the Grand Canal, had surely echoed the footsteps of Shylock when he returned to his house to find that Jessica had fled with her Christian lover. Who has walked in Venice without the Lyceum pictures rising in his mind? I recall those pictures, not on account of any scenic magnificence, but because they live in the imagination together with the noble figures that moved in them; just as I recall the cuckoo-clock in the simple interior of Dr. Primrose's parsonage, because it reminds me

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of the old Vicar, one of Irving's most admirable impersonations, making the inventory of his household gods when misfortune had overtaken him.

It is said that, as a manager, Sir Henry did much for the stage, but very little for the modern dramatic author. This is true; but, in a policy of poetic drama largely Shakespearian, the modern author could not have a conspicuous place. It would have been deeply interesting to see Shakespeare at the Lyceum alternating with a comedy of our own day by Pinero; to see Irving exchange his doublet and hose, or the ecclesiastical robes of a bygone age, for the garments which are worn by dramatic personages who have chambers in the Albany. As a matter of fact, I do not think he appeared in any modern costume on the Lyceum stage more than once in twenty-five years. In a dramatic sense the clothes would have been too small; he was too big a personality for the English comedy of our day; he would have looked like the spacious times of Elizabeth cribb'd in a May-fair drawing-room.

Poetic dramas of all eras used to pour in at the Lyceum; a rage for historical characters possessed many persons in all ranks of

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life; it was quite a common thing for a man engaged in some humble but exacting avocation to toss off a five-act play in blank verse on the subject of Savonarola, and to intimate that on the Lyceum stage the success of this modest effort was certain. Unknown authors were resolved not to hide their lights under bushels; but they sent the bushels in, and there was no illumination. One illustrious hand wrote dramatic verse to some purpose. Tennyson's "Queen Mary" and "The Cup" were played at the Lyceum; and had Tennyson lived to see the production of "Becket," he would have been a gratified man. Mr. George Meredith tells an amusing story of a walk he took with Tennyson one day, when the bard was very silent and gloomy. They walked several miles, and suddenly Tennyson growled, "Apollodorus says I am not a great poet." This critic was a Scottish divine, and neither his name nor his opinion was of much consequence. Mr. Meredith said something to that effect; and Tennyson retorted, "But he ought not to say I am not a great poet." That was the entire conversation.

Had Apollodorus said that Tennyson was not a great dramatist, he would not have outraged the heavens. When he thought of the

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stage in the last months of his life, Tennyson was rather embittered by the failure of that luckless piece, "The Promise of May." "But Irving will do me justice with 'Becket,'" said the poet. Justice was done indeed, and something more. After twelve years Sir Henry has been playing "Becket" again, and the spell of his personality has never been so commanding. The actor who gave us thrills thirty years ago as the haunted criminal, can do what he wills with us as the mediæval fanatic and martyr. By the cold reading of history I judge Becket to have been an obstinate bigot, resolute to protect a dissolute clergy against the laws of the realm, prating of "God's honour" when he meant his own authority, and drunk with the power which the Middle Ages gave to the priest who wielded the ban of the Church. You can read Tennyson's drama, and still have that idea of Becket very strongly in your mind. But not when you see Irving in the part; then the grasping prelate is transfigured; he is a sublime protagonist in the great conflict of Church and State; his martyrdom has a beauty of sacrifice which sums up all that the saints endured; and the accusing voice of history is stilled. The imagination of the

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actor has never had a greater triumph; he seems born to impersonate ecclesiastics, great Princes of the Church in all ages, and country parsons like the Vicar of Wakefield. Then you remember his sinister monarchs, his Richard and Louis, the flamboyant quality of some characters, the delicate detail of others; such a portrait in miniature as Corporal Brewster, finished to the point where it is just divided by a nicely calculated shade from painful realism. One remembers these figures with some appreciation of their diversity, looking back upon the range of art this remarkable personality has compassed.

For the actor's calling, Sir Henry Irving has done more than any of his great predecessors. None of them ever watched over its interests with his jealous care. He has combated prejudice with so fine a temper, and pursued his art with so true a service, that the public on both sides of the Atlantic has come to rank him high among its worthies; and people to whom the theatre makes no appeal hold his name in honour. The personal magnetism of any remarkable man is best attested by its influence upon his eminent contemporaries. In Henry Irving's case, it is illustrated through some of the foremost

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men of his age. The Emperor William, when he met the actor, betrayed a certain preparation for the occasion; before a word could be said by way of introduction, he launched into an eloquent exposition of Shakespeare, which, I am told, threw a dazzling light on several obscure problems. Mr. Gladstone was attracted in a different way. At one period, when he was not burdened by the cares of office, he was fond of watching the performances at the Lyceum from a chair in the "wings." One night, when the stage was set for the opera ball in the "Corsican Brothers," his curiosity led him into one of the boxes for spectators in the scene. Up went the curtain; Mr. Gladstone was at once desecrated by the pit and greeted with shouts of joy, which caused him hastily to withdraw. This was his first and only appearance in the drama, outside of the dear old "legitimate" at Westminster. The magnetic influence of Irving induced him to give a singular performance even there. He took the actor to the House very late one evening, put him under the Gallery, and sat with a grim, impassive air on the Treasury Bench. Suddenly, without apparent reason, he leaped to his feet, and delivered an impassioned speech, set off

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with all the expressive and dramatic gesture for which he was so famous. The House seemed surprised; Members looked at one another, and murmured: "What is the old man up to now?" They thought it was some deep, political game. But, a week or two later, a friend of Irving's, encountering Mr. Gladstone, mentioned the actor's visit to the House, and Gladstone eagerly inquired: "What did he think of my speech? *I made it for him!*"

Never in the least suggesting the traditional player's manner off the stage, Irving has always impressed most people, I think, by an indefinable air of authority. A stranger, meeting him for the first time, might take him for an experienced diplomatist, with that sardonic humour which springs from a diplomatic knowledge of human nature. Presently, the observant stranger would detect in him the humorist, with the true humorist's kindly eye for the affections as well as the failings of his species. There has never been in Henry Irving any pose of any sort, but always a fine simplicity; a quietly impressive suggestion that the head of the dramatic profession took that profession seriously, and exacted on its behalf the respect that was due to his own

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personal character. This may partly explain why he fascinates liberal-minded Bishops, and has a strong following among the junior clergy. Even Nonconformist divines have sat at the Lyceum without attempting to disguise their edification; and one of them—a famous preacher now dead—was plainly inspired in his purely dramatic moments by the secular pulpit in Wellington Street.

Long before Irving received his knighthood, the late Queen desired to confer that distinction upon him. This was as far back as 1883. He was about to pay his first visit to America; and the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Coleridge, who presided at a dinner that was given to him by a distinguished company, suggested this as an admirable occasion for announcing the signal mark of the Queen's favour. But, with his characteristically subtle sense of fitness, Irving felt that his first appeal to the American public should be made entirely on his artistic merits, without the shadow of a suggestion that he sought to influence the judgment by such a decoration. It was a delicate position; the favours of the Sovereign cannot be lightly put aside; but the choice was characteristic of the man. Since then, the American people have given

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him many proofs of their warm regard ; and few ambassadors have done more than he to make good-will between the two nations. More than twenty years have passed since he set an unfamiliar foot on the shores which have become so friendly. There have been many changes ; the ranks of the old players are sadly thinned. The melancholy grace of Edwin Booth is a beloved memory ; Jefferson will delight us no more. Who that saw them can forget the brilliant nights at the Lyceum long ago, when Booth and Irving played together in "Othello," and that tragedy was represented with a general excellence such as no man had ever known ? Henry Irving may be called the last of the Old Guard, crossing the ocean once more to bid farewell to the great people who have made him one of themselves for a generation. And when the moment comes for another leave-taking, and we on this side must say our own farewells to him at the close of his public life, they will mingle with echoes of friendship and regret from a throng of American hearts.

II—*Sparrowgrass and Shakespeare*

SOLOMON (not the philosopher, but the West End fruiterer) attracts me greatly at this season by the glory of his window. If I were to write an Ode on the Intimations of Early Spring, I should address it to Mr. Solomon, for have I not stood in the lingering blasts of winter, and gazed hopefully on his giant asparagus? Yes, the moment it appears in the window at thirty shillings a bundle I feel the vernal sap pulsating in my veins. What was the song that Becky Sharp used to sing—the song of the maiden who explains to an anxious parent how she rejoices with the rose on her balcony, and the bird in the tree, at the coming of Spring?

“And so I laugh and blush, Mamma,
And that’s the reason why!”

And so I laugh and blush (as well as the native yellow of my complexion will permit) at Mr. Solomon’s asparagus. And just as some people study the barometer, and feel cheerful when the glass is rising, so I study that bundle, and note hilariously that the price is falling. For when asparagus is cheap, then is the winter of

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our discontent made glorious summer, and all the chills and agues that glowered at us in the doctor's eye, in the deep phials of the apothecary buried.

Shakespeare appears to have known nothing of asparagus, or I think he would have amended Hamlet's brutal retort to poor Ophelia's remark about the introduction to the play scene: "'Tis brief, my lord." "As woman's love," says Hamlet—a most wanton slander. He should have said: "As the asparagus season." Alas! from the moment when that bundle of giant asparagus, almost as large as the emblem of authority that was carried by the Roman lictors, dawns on my enraptured vision, to the melancholy dinner-hour when the waiter informs me that asparagus is no more, there is a poor span of weeks. Deduct the days when you cannot afford it, and how many remain for the gratification of a taste which makes me hope for his sake, that when Nebuchadnezzar lived on grass, it was what the Cockney kitchen-maids call "sparrowgrass"? Do not think me the slave of gluttony. My passion for asparagus is chiefly social. Have you considered that it is one of the very few dishes we are permitted by civilisation to eat with our fingers? (Don't be tempted to use the clippers, for they will

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make you drop melted butter in your lap!) Yes, when I hold a stick of asparagus suspended in the air, and adjust my mouth at the proper angle to catch the coy but seductive dainty, I feel that I have returned to nature. If Rousseau could behold that spectacle, he would be comforted by the thought that his philosophy was not wasted.

Mr. Solomon's prophetic eye embraces Summer as well as Spring. There are strawberries in his window at thirty-five shillings a box. I have a misgiving that even to look at them makes one guilty of what Mr. Labouchere calls "ostentatious expenditure." Even Paula Tanqueray, who liked fruit when it was expensive, might have shrunk from twenty-four strawberries for thirty-five shillings. I fall back on that philosopher renowned in nursery lore as Simple Simon. Like all great minds he has suffered from vulgar misunderstanding. When the pieman asked him for his coin, and he answered, "Indeed, I have not any!" he spoke, not with fatuity, as the children are taught to believe, but with well-bred disdain. He was not a zany, but a connoisseur, and it was as absurd to ask for his penny as it would be to ask the reviewers to pay for their review copies. Now, I should like to

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explain the case of Simple Simon to Mr. Solomon.

JAQUES. Good day, Mr. Solomon. You remember Simple Simon?

MR. S. Yes, he wanted pies for nothing, and never thought of selling them at a hundred per cent. profit. And his name was Simon! Most unaccountable.

JAQUES. I am sorry to find that you take so severely commercial a view of the story. I want you to see it in its truly poetical light.

MR. S. (*hastily*). Afraid I have no time. Won't you try our pipless oranges?

JAQUES. No, thank you. The pipless orange is a mean evasion of moral discipline.

MR. S. Or our Cape plums?

JAQUES. There will be more than enough of them in the Budget. But I see you have all the delicacies of the season after next. Are those the strawberries of 1902?

MR. S. (*with great urbanity*). Not quite. But they are pretty well advanced.

JAQUES. And only thirty-five shillings the box. Dear me! (*Eats one.*) Let me assure you that the flavour (*smacks his lips*) is so far advanced (*another smack*) that one scarcely overtakes it. If I were you I would call this strawberry De Wet.

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MR. S. (*rather curtly*). Excuse me, but it is eighteenpence.

JAQUES. My dear Mr. Solomon! Don't you see I am offering you a considerable improvement on the story of Simple Simon? I have tasted your ware. I propose a striking name for it, a name that will catch the eye of the ostentatiously extravagant, and make your thirty-five shilling boxes go off like matches. And you ask me for my eighteen pennies! Indeed, I have not any!

MR. S. (*in a tone that suggests illumination*). Well, upon my word!

JAQUES. Yes, I knew you would see it. And let me remind you of Cleopatra's priceless pearl. She dissolved it in a glass of wine, and I dare say it had as much flavour as your strawberry. So there you have another taking name—the Cleopatra. Upon *my* word. Mr. Solomon, I think I have earned that eighteenpence, to say nothing of the poetry, for which I make no charge.

MR. S. (*speechless, perhaps with joy*). ! ! ! !

Perhaps this imaginary dialogue is a total misapprehension of Mr. Solomon. He may keep those thirty-five shilling boxes simply to give away, as Mr. Carnegie gives away his millions. And this makes me suspect that

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Mr. Solomon is only waiting to be asked to establish the endowed theatre. For a moment this week he must have felt the bitter sense of ambition forestalled when he heard that Mr. Carnegie had undertaken that great work. It was a false report, and now the way is clear for Mr. Solomon, who fills his window with the fruits of the earth, to adorn a theatre with the flowers of the mind. Munificent enthusiasts go about erecting free libraries. Why cannot one of them try the experiment of endowing a theatre purely for the circulation of ideas? Some people think that no good could come of it; but then many people are sceptical about the utility of the free library. I have an impartial sympathy with all hobbies that have a clear ideal of the public interest, and as I am sure Mr. Solomon is of my opinion, I hope he will not let himself be deterred by mere cavil and idle prophecy.

Nor should there be any timidity on the score of "ostentatious expenditure." Mr. Solomon must resist the blandishments of Mr. Sidney Lee, who thinks that Shakespeare ought to be represented, as it were, in his shirt-sleeves. Let us have all the drapery when it is becoming. The last time I saw "Coriolanus," the Roman populace was as little suggestive of wayward

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passion as the depressed groups that listen to unknown orators in Hyde Park on Sunday; and the Roman Senate was like "a party in a parlour, all silent, and all damned." It is a mistake to suppose that when Shakespeare chooses ancient Rome as the scene of a drama, the way to do him reverence is to play it in a sort of classical Little Peddlington. I can understand the contention that it is better to have it that way than not at all; but there are people who will tell you that Shakespeare's Rome should be left to the imagination, and that any scenic picture of it distracts the studious mind. I wish the man of business who produced his plays at the Globe Theatre, Blackfriars, were at Mr. Solomon's elbow. He would vote for Rome, and not for Little Peddlington.

III—*Jaques and the Beanstalk*

I REGRET that the learned author of "The Theatre in France and England," a treatise that embraces our modest generation as well as antiquity, has given but scanty attention to the English pantomime. He dismisses it in half a page with such information as this:—"The *mise-en-scène* at the Drury Lane Theatre, in London, is magnificent, and in the provinces Bristol is noted for its effective scenery and rich costumes." Not a philosophical word about the development (or degeneration) of pantomime from the simple fairy tale (with humorous trimmings) to the gorgeous miscellany of odds and ends, the dazzling shreds of costume and the purple patches of the music-hall troubadour! I expected Mr. Charles Hastings to tell me why Harlequin and Columbine no longer give the sanction of poetic grace to scenes of outrage on law and order. Yes, where is the disreputable but delightful Clown of my childhood? I remember him first in the pantomime of "The Goose with the Golden Eggs," more especially his interview with an egg-merchant whose wares were

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liberally displayed in baskets. "Did you happen to know the Goose that laid the Golden Eggs?" said the Clown affably to this tradesman. "I knew her very well. A most respectable old bird until she went into politics. Then she left off laying Golden Eggs, and took to laying eggs for public meetings. Why, you've got a lot of them here. What a handy man you are!" Then he threw an egg at the policeman, and all the children in the boxes shrieked with joy at the pantomime "rally" that destroyed a great deal of property, to say nothing of moral principles.

Why have we been robbed of these delights? Mr. Hastings does not say; but one passage in his great work suggests how he might have handled the theme. "From 1850 there was an outburst of Puritanism which relegated the plays of Shakespeare, as an illicit pleasure, to the surburban theatre of Sadler's Wells." This throws a new light on Phelps's enterprise, and makes me wonder how Charles Kean managed to square the Puritans at the Princess's. Perhaps he was liberal with "orders." Some collector of theatrical curios may possess a faded yellow document on which is inscribed "Admit this party of Puritans to

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a private box." But although they might extend such tolerance to illicit pleasure in Shakespeare, how could they endure my Clown's illustration of government by party, the Harlequin's habit of jumping through the shop-fronts of honest tradesmen, the Columbine's dainty nonchalance amidst larceny and riot? If Mr. Hastings will look into this, he may find that another "outburst of Puritanism" has swept away the Harlequinade. Serious views as to the education of children have so far prevailed that no upright citizen can permit his family to enjoy the famous interludes with the red-hot poker. Or can it be that Scotland Yard declined to be responsible for the safety of our hearths and homes if the Force were held up twice a day in the pantomime season to the derision of babes?

This oversight on the part of Mr. Hastings is all the more singular because he touches some points of our theatrical history that have escaped the general notice. Sir Henry Irving, I fancy, does not remember his attempt to revive the Miracle Play. "Under his direction 'The Gift of Tongues' was put on the stage in London some few years ago; but the experiment was a complete failure, and has not been attempted since." Save the erudite

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Mr. Hastings, who has ever heard of "The Gift of Tongues," and its luckless production by Sir Henry Irving? How are these graces hid? The public memory is said to be short; but this is a case of *tabula rasa*, or what Lord Rosebery calls a clean slate. Some magic sponge has passed over the public mind, and left not a trace on it of this episode in Sir Henry Irving's career. And yet I do not challenge the accuracy of Mr. Hastings, for I happen to be the only man who remembers a pantomime at Drury Lane entitled "Jack and the Beanstalk, or the Land Where Both Ends Meet." Jack was a spendthrift pursued by writs, and one evening he had the humorous idea of planting one of them in the garden. Next day he did not awake till two in the afternoon, for his bedroom was darkened by a gigantic tree, so that he thought he was in the middle of the night. The writ had sprouted in this magical fashion, and as the tree was very convenient for climbing, Jack ate a hasty lunch and started upwards.

Thanks to expert sceneshifters, the journey was short, and Jack found himself in a strange country, and in the bustle of a village festival. The dresses of the girls struck him as curiously homely, and he said, "My dears, you are

all very nice, but how in the name of fortune do you come to be dressed like that? Dowdy isn't the word! Do get yourselves some new clothes, I beg, and have them made like this." Then he gave a brief sketch of the pantomime finery to which he was accustomed, and the village maidens perceptibly changed colour. They were surprised at him, they said; moreover, who was going to pay? "Pay!" he exclaimed. "Do not use that ill-bred expression. Mention my name to the dressmakers. This is a new country, and my credit will be quite fresh." Here the principal village maiden began to sing, and Jack remarked with greater wonder than ever that she had a charming voice, and knew how to use it. But the song was still more surprising, for it set forth the moral precepts of "The Land Where Both Ends Meet." There you cannot get anything "on tick," and hearts are light at Christmas because no bills fall due. Jack said he had been concerned in many fairy tales, but this was too absurd. What was the good of a Beanstalk if it led to a place where you had to pay your tailor? But at this point the village maidens danced an allegorical Ballet of Contentment, which was followed by a pageant representing the Lowly Virtues of Cottage

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Homes, and Jack suffered a visible change of heart. Mr. Hastings will be sorry to hear that this attempt to turn the Drury Lane pantomime into a Miracle Play was not rewarded as it deserved.

One custom of antiquity recorded by Mr. Hastings might be revived with a modern application. The Greek drama was often commended to public notice by the levy of an income-tax on the citizens to pay the salaries of the actors. The salaries were sometimes reduced by the municipal authorities when a new piece did not prove attractive. This must have complicated the sentiments of some frugal playgoers. Imagine a first-night audience now, torn between the emotion excited by the play and the desire to cut down the income-tax! I do not suggest that this dilemma would help the cause of dramatic art. But a novel delight might be given to many households if the actor would call for his little account. He would be more welcome than the rate-collector, and quite as dignified. You would be sitting in the study, deep in your new treatise on "Moral Emblems of All Nations," when the neat-handed Phyllis would announce a visitor in a choking voice. "What on earth is the matter with the girl?" you

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would remark severely. "Please, sir, I'm very sorry, but I—I know I shall die!" Then she would hand you a card, which was not a card but a photograph, disclosing the irresistible features of Mr. Dan Leno!

Hardly had you requested him to be seated when shrieks of joy would be heard from an upper storey, and down would rush the children to greet the genius of pantomime. Fired by this homage, he would improvise a comic sketch, entirely adapted, as the pantomime is not, to the humorous comprehension of childhood. It would recall the Clown of happier days, and you would almost weep with pleasure to hear your youngest-born shrilly piping, "Oh, Mr. Leno, let's heat the poker!" At first there might be objections to the payment of actors' salaries in this fashion; but the errands of Mr. Dan Leno would establish him and his profession so firmly in the affections of a multitude of children that the stoutest-hearted grumbler at taxation would succumb. This idea may even suggest to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the expediency of making Mr. Dan Leno a travelling Commissioner of the Inland Revenue. It would save a deal of correspondence in the newspapers, not to mention visits of the aggrieved to Somerset House.

IV—*In Praise of Wine*

IN many households, and in every club, there is always a sceptic who warns you against the wine. "Not a bottle fit to drink," he will say with emphasis; and you gather vaguely that, save in one or two cellars belonging to exalted personages who ask him to dinner, there is not a drop of decent wine in the land. This depressing view finds some countenance in the work of an American expert, Mr. Edmund R. Emerson, who has written "*The Story of the Vine*" (Putnams). Mr. Emerson is by nature an enthusiast. No writer, not even Omar Khayyám or George Meredith, has extolled the Vine with greater fervour. There was a time, says Mr. Emerson, when "superstition and slander" sought to destroy champagne; but what can surpass it now "in tingling the torpid blood of the coward, while it stirs like martial music the souls of the brave and heroic," or "in adding a lustre to the charm of beauty, and in imparting to the pale cheek a blush that rivals the eastern sky heralding to the waking west the arrival of the solar god"? After this outburst we

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know pretty well what to expect. We learn that the discovery of the cork was of "inestimable value to mankind." Without the stimulus of wine where would have been the culture of the Greeks? Mr. Emerson might have improved upon a famous couplet by writing—

‘Let laws and learning, arts and commerce, die
When all the wine-vats of the world run dry.’

There is no better rule of health, he tells us, than to drink wine regularly. Do not try it for a week; give it a lifetime, as the patent medicine-makers say in their advertisements. For one thing, it is an infallible cure for dyspepsia. Doctors are not agreed on that point, but Mr. Emerson cites the legend of the Moselle which cured an ailing bishop, and was called "Doctor" ever afterwards. What gave the Romans strength to conquer the world? Their taste in wine may send a shudder through a feeble posterity. They drank Falernian, which would probably choke the modern toper. They mixed it with tar, assafoetida, bitumen, aloes, chalk, pepper, wormwood, poppies, and boiled sea-water. This was what the distiller of to-day calls a "blend"; and your ancient Roman could drink a gallon "at a breath." When he gave

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a toast, a bumper was drunk to every letter of the "toasted person's name." Moreover, in the best houses it was customary to drink from cups of gold, which the guests used to carry away, so that even if they did not relish the host's liquor, they could console themselves with his family plate. This pleasant hospitality is not practised now, even at the tables of South African millionaires. No wonder the Romans were a virile people; and if you make a wry face at the boiled seawater and its companion flavours, remember that there may be worse things to-day in that wineglass which it would not be worth your while to take home, even if you were cordially invited.

For Mr. Emerson has to confess that adulteration, which began before the Christian era, is a deadly blight on the fair fame of the Vine. The wine-grower's cheek ought to wear a blush that rivals the eastern sky. Labels are snares, and the cork, which should be of inestimable value to mankind, is an impostor. Mr. Emerson weeps to think of the vineyards which are credited with an enormously greater quantity of wine than they can possibly yield. There are brands from the Rhine which are not even German cousins to the grape. An American

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consul has solemnly affirmed that all the wines which leave Marseilles for the United States are liquid lies. That famous Moselle which cured the bishop (all he did was to take it regularly and largely) might still make it impossible for an apothecary to earn a livelihood if it had remained untainted by the greed of competition. Mr. Emerson puts in a chronicler as a witness to the average daily consumption of sixteen English quart bottles of Moselle per head in the days when "sickness was very rarely met with," and the people lived for ever, in the pleasant region from which this elixir took its name. How is legislation to smite adulterators when "the public, as a whole, are more or less ignorant as to what constitutes pure wine"? Does anybody know? The Romans, with their boiled sea-water, neither knew nor cared. It was the splendid indifference of a conquering race; but eventually it brought about the Decline and Fall. But for that sea-water, aided by tar and chalk, Mr. Gibbon would not have written his celebrated history. Is the British Empire going the same road? Mr. Emerson's remarks about old port are disquieting. It was England that gave port its commanding position in the world; but except in the first three years of its vogue,

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not a drop of pure port has entered this kingdom! I dissociate myself from any responsibility for this staggering assertion. Old gentlemen in the clubs, who smack their lips over ostensible port, and tell anecdotes of the '47 vintage, must address Mr. Emerson if they feel aggrieved by the statement that even '47 is nothing but brandy. To appreciate it duly you must have the head of the sailor who visited a foreign wine-vault, where he drank a number of vintages unknown to him. "And werry good it was," he said, in recounting each experience; "and after that we went back to the port, sherry, and other light wines of the country." Upon sherry Mr. Emerson is not so severe. We can fancy him singing, as Mr. Edward Terry used to sing, "I'm off to the bodega for a glass of sherry wine." He is more than respectful to Marsala, which sprang originally from Nelson's estate in Sicily. This should make us exclaim with Dr. Johnson (partially), "Claret for boys, port for men, brandy for heroes, and Marsala for the Navy League!"

But even this cup is dashed from our lips by Mr. Emerson, who assures us that the best wines are nowhere exported. You cannot drink real Tokay unless you are on visiting

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terms with the Emperor Francis Joseph. You may drink Château Yquem at a fabulous price; but all the while the cream of that wine is reserved exclusively for French noblemen. You may think it odd that the Italian wines in Italy are not of the first order; whereas it is not in the least odd, considering that the best wines are consumed by the people who make them. The finest juices of the Johannisberg vineyard enliven "the noble families of the district." It is only the "inferior grades" that are sold to the foreigner. This is a galling inequality. Do we not send abroad as good pale ale as we drink at home? Where is the policy of the "open door"? Perhaps Mr. Emerson will be accused of exaggeration. We even suspect him of a patriotic motive. America he declares to be the true land of the Vine. Five centuries before Columbus it was discovered by a Norwegian explorer, who called it Vinland. President Jefferson said that cheap wine was essential to national sobriety. Mr. Emerson would like to blend that dictum with the doctrine of Monroe. Why should Americans drink foreign wines when they have the Catawba, whose grandfather grape grew fat on Californian summers? The reason is that "a feeling of depreciation," "a spirit of be-

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littlement," prevails among American wine-growers. They are too modest to sell their own wares. Goaded by Mr. Emerson, they will lose this singular shyness, and we shall yet see Mr. Pierpont Morgan turn Catawba into a Trust to exhilarate the world.

V—*In Praise of Food*

IN a street with which I am very intimate there is, just now, an affecting sight. An ambitious man has opened a new restaurant, absurdly cheap, and quite empty. I pass his window twice or thrice a day, and see the neat white tables that would groan (as the tables used to do in novels when it was romantic to have a large appetite) if a hungry public would give the signal. There stand the waiters, toying with napkins to keep their hands in. Waiters, waiters everywhere, and not a soul to serve! The bill of fare is in the window, and I notice with a pang that the dinner, which was cheap enough to begin with, is now sixpence cheaper. Within a radius of a hundred yards there must be a dozen restaurants, all alive, all busily filling that vacuum which makes its peremptory call at least four times in the twenty-four hours; yet nobody seems able to discover this modest table-d'hôte that has dropped sixpence in vain appeal to the frugal! To a man of sensibility, I repeat, it is an affecting sight, and as I pass that window it is with a shrinking from the glance of the neglected speculator indoors, lest his eye should

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say quite plainly, "You, at all events, know the truth; you have witnessed the sacrifice of the sixpence; and still you have the heart not to come in and dine!"

This reproach would not be quite just, for I have had one meal in the place. It was excellent; but the solitude struck a chill inwards, that sadly hampered digestion. Your true Londoner cannot bear to eat alone. He may be a morose feeder, ready to bite the head off the stranger at the adjoining table; but the presence of that stranger is necessary to his perfect comfort. Half the charm of a restaurant is the reflection that you would rather die than eat soup as your neighbour does. This is one of the indispensable bonds of society. The restaurant is pre-eminently social, and to be quite contented there you must have company that provokes a slight arching of the eyebrows, or appeals to you as a vision of beauty. Landor said he did not mind dining with one or two people, but a dinner-party was "a barbarous herd." To-day we like to herd in the restaurant, and the desire is not barbarous, but the expression of a civic instinct, for the wisdom of mankind, if it has settled nothing else, has decided that dinner is the communion of souls, whatever reservation you

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may privately register as to their manœuvres with the soup.

It is sad and strange that under such conditions the art of writing about food should decay. Music you always have at the feast. Tschaikowsky weaves a symphony round your cutlet. There is a grill-room to which I am often beckoned by a violinist with a magical touch and a singular nose. When the toast-master says, "My lords and gentlemen, pray silence for a song," your spirit rises, and takes up a listening attitude on a cloud. Minstrelsy, yes; but where is literature? The genial author of "Dinners and Dinners," it is true, has achieved a task that I thought beyond any man of his time. He has dined at every restaurant in town, given you a graphic sketch of the repast, astonished you with the moderation of the bill, and wrapt the whole transaction in the veritable genius of the table. Take his book to one of those restaurants, and see how you fare, not only with the dinner and the bill, but also with the persiflage that the occasion should inspire. But look at the dialogue in current fiction and plays when the characters are eating and drinking! Mr. Bernard Shaw has written a play about Julius Cæsar, who, at an Egyptian feast, after bragging that he discovered the

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British oyster, calls for barley-water. Barley-water and oysters! Why not make Cæsar a vegetarian? A recent novel opens with a dinner-party. The host's champagne, '74 Pommery, is much admired, and he states with bald precision that a generous duke sent him three dozen; whereupon a guest remarks, "How like the duke's princely way!" That is all they have to say about '74 Pommery.

Personally the most abstemious of men, I like the feasts in novels to have a poetical opulence. Let them be, as Polonius warned his son that waistcoats ought not to be, "exprest in fancy." Let the guests discuss them with taste and discernment. A literary journal lately offered a guinea prize for the best snatch of dialogue from an unpublished novel. The successful piece was some foolish love-talk on the balcony. A guinea for a sparkling dialogue about a dinner might have been well bestowed in the true interests of literature. The writer of a manual on conversation was much derided for pointing out that the *menu* suggests the most natural topics for table-talk. The fish, for example, should lead the mind to the sea, ships, the British Colonies, and the advantages of emigration. Why drag in the British Colonies? When

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you talk of fish, you ought to consider how it was cooked and eaten by the Romans. Tell your companion (with discretion) what passed at the table of Heliogabalus. Harrow her soul with the story that Bulwer Lytton repeated in "The Parisians," about the epicure's dog in the siege of Paris. When provisions ran short, the dog was slain by the epicure's friends in league with his cook, and served up at his table in a ragout. He lamented the dog's mysterious disappearance, and sighed, "Ah! how poor Fido would have enjoyed these bones!"

Mr. Bernard Shaw declares that if literature is to have any vital meaning for the twentieth century, human nature must be rescued from the tyranny of Shakespeare and Thackeray. Not while breath remains in this body to proclaim what cookery owes to literary genius! The Shakespearean junkettings are a constant joy to the well-regulated mind. True, you do not see old Capulet's "trifling foolish banquet," as he modestly calls it; but no thoughtful manager ever neglects a procession of lordly dishes to appropriate music during a slight pause in the action. How often have I seen peacocks borne on the head of the well-graced "super"! Do you know what is the

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most consummate expression of villainy in all Shakespeare? It is Don John's remark in "Much Ado," when another "trifling foolish banquet" is in preparation: "Would the cook were of my mind!" He would have poisoned the whole company! Compared with Don John, Iago is a seraph. When Hamlet taxes Claudius with false promises, he says, "You cannot feed capons so." There is a world of philosophy in that, which Mr. Shaw, as a vegetarian, can never appreciate.

In an essay (little read now, I fear) entitled "Memorials of Gormandising," Thackeray describes a Paris dinner in the year 1841. He dines with a friend, chiefly off *entrecôte* and partridge; but it is the steak that moves him to rhapsody. "G—— and I had quarrelled about the soup, but when we began on the steak we looked at each other, and loved each other. We did not speak; our hearts were too full for that; but we took a bit, and laid down our forks and looked at each other and understood each other. There were no two individuals on this wide earth—no two lovers billing in the shade—no mother clasping baby to her heart, more supremely happy than we. Every now and then we had a glass of honest, firm, generous Burgundy, that nobly supported

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the meat. As you may fancy, we did not leave a single morsel of the steak; but when it was done we put bits of bread into the silver dish and wistfully sopped up the gravy." This last performance makes it necessary to add that the feast was held in a private room in a café on the boulevard. Even in the year 1841, sopping up the gravy with bits of bread was not, I presume, an ecstasy conducted in public. But we need not dwell on that detail. Let us rather rejoice in the liberty, equality, fraternity, and consummate cookery that breathe throughout the scene. Here is no affected disguise of honest rapture, and although Thackeray lays down debatable propositions, such as that "a third-rate Burgundy and a third-rate claret are better than the best," with what a sense of luxurious fulness, spiritual and physical, you rise from his simple story! It is in itself a banquet for true heart and digestion; and if I were a millionaire, I should like nothing better than to invite a "barbarous herd" to just such a dinner in that neglected restaurant I spoke of anon, to see the proprietor beam with the first ray of prosperity, and even—yes! even to see the whole company sop up the gravy.

VI—*Meat and Drink*

IN a little book called "Diet in Relation to Age and Activity," Sir Henry Thompson, hale and hearty at eighty-two, gives us the lessons of his longevity. If it were the habit of mankind to profit by sound advice, most of us would carry this volume in our pockets, meditate upon it as our physiological breviary, and find very little use for doctors. Luckily for the medical profession, Sir Henry Thompson's example demands a renunciation almost as difficult for men in general as monastic vows. Thirty years ago, at the age of fifty-two, he gave up alcohol. For the sake of experiment, five or six years back, he tried the effect of a claret-glass of good wine at dinner every day for two months. Then came back the sick headaches, and pains in the joints, from which he had suffered in early life until he abstained entirely from alcoholic drinks. "Moreover," after his abandonment of alcohol, "the joints gradually lost their stiffness, and ultimately became as supple and mobile as they were in youth, and continue absolutely so to this day." We may tell Sir Henry Thompson that we do

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not suffer from sick headaches ; but how many moderate drinkers of eighty-two, or even sixty-two, are ready to swear that their joints have all the suppleness of youth ? Are old gentlemen willing to ascribe what they call rheumatism to the habitual though modest glass ? There is so much controversy about alcohol among the medical experts that the moderate drinker plumes himself on the ancient wisdom of the middle course between toppers and abstainers. On the subject of cakes Calverley's schoolboy had learned that " excruciating aches resulted if we ate too many." For the moderate drinker this philosophy comprises cakes and ale, and when the aches come he puts them down to chills. A French writer has collected the opinions of sixty physicians in Paris on the effects of alcohol. Thirty-four affirm that a moderate use, say a bottle of wine a day, is beneficial. Nine will have no compromise with alcohol in any form, and seventeen declare that to the health of most people one bottle a day makes no difference whatever. One doctor declined to hazard any opinion on the plea that the varieties of human physiology are too great to warrant any positive judgment. But Sir Henry Thompson is in a position to speak not only for himself. " It may be fairly said that

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one example does not suffice to prove a case. But it is not a single example, and really designates a very large class of active men among all ranks, possessing a more or less similar temperament, of which a type is here described, and it is for such that I have found it so successful." This vision of a shining band of veterans, all as supple as athletes, ought to give pause to many an aged man when he is about to order his evening toddy. But he may say that the zeal of the convert belongs to youngsters of fifty-two.

Food, not drink, however, is the burden of Sir Henry Thompson's practical counsel. Half our bodily ills are due to improper eating. It is a common fallacy that, as we grow older, we need more nourishment, "the extra glass of cordial, the superlatively strong extract of food." Sir Henry Thompson draws an alarming picture of the head of the family sinking to decay because his affectionate spouse plies him with dainties he cannot digest, the egg whipped up with sherry, the insidious calf's-foot jelly, the inopportune cup of cocoa. Many a fond wife is slowly doing her lord to death, for all the world as if she were a poisoner in one of Miss Braddon's early novels. She urges him to try patent foods, which are so

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“nutritious” that his stomach cannot stand them, and she imagines that even his drinks must have nutriment, forgetting that “the primary object of drink is to satisfy thirst,” and that to take milk, for example, with meat is “one of the greatest dietary blunders that can be perpetrated.” Even the dentist is an unwitting agent of mischief. He gives you a new set of masticators as efficacious as the originals; but he does not warn you that the loss of your natural teeth is an indication that the body needs less food than it demanded in your heyday. Your tailor is also in the innocent conspiracy, for he congratulates you on the increase of your girth, as if it were the glory of the citizen to cut into a deal of material when he is ordering new clothes. Here, we suspect, Sir Henry Thompson is overdoing the case. Is a man really flattered when he is told that his waist has grown another inch? “And you, poor deluded victim, are more than half willing to believe that your increasing size is an equivalent to increasing health and strength, especially as your wife emphatically takes that view, and regards your augmenting portliness with approval.” Is she sincere? Or is her approval part of that dissimulation from which women

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are not yet freed? Does the fondest wife, when the husband's broad back is turned, sometimes drop a tear of æsthetic regret because it is so broad? How much is added to personal dignity by physical bulk is a question on which we should like to take the opinion of the middle classes. Can a thin man rule his household with the moral weight of a stout man? Sir Henry Thompson does not go into that, but he says that not one stout man in fifty lives to a good old age. "The typical man of eighty or ninety years, still retaining a respectable amount of energy of body and mind, is lean and spare, and lives on slender rations." It does not follow that he must have a hungry look, and be a conspirator, like Cassius. Very thoughtfully Sir Henry has put his portrait in this volume, and an instructive picture it is of a spare and dignified body, and an alert, but not dangerous brain. Fat men may contemplate it with a passing misgiving. If only they had taken to "slender rations" in time, they might have had, not only the prospect of living as long as Sir Henry Thompson, but also of escaping those confounded ailments which "portliness" is heir to.

Will the middle classes take heed? This

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authority addresses to them the reproach of Shylock to Lancelot Gobbo. They are huge feeders. Three-fourths of their diet comes from the animal kingdom. Sir Henry Thompson is not a vegetarian, and he banters the vegetarians on their partiality for eggs and milk. But he maintains that three-fourths of our food should be vegetable. Such a dietary must increase the zest for food, especially by expelling from club and restaurant the "penetrating odours of meat cookery." It abolishes the terrible *ennui* of beef and mutton, and ensures "a lighter and more active brain." This is so revolutionary that some people may suspect a likeness between Sir Henry Thompson and Cassius after all. Others may suggest this dietary for the War Office, where mobility of brain is somewhat lacking. There is an undoubted fascination in Sir Henry's portrait of the "light feeder" whose "palate is sensitive to mild impressions." "After the meal is over, his wit is fresher, his temper more cheerful," and he does not snore in the arm-chair. Dyspepsia is unknown to him, for he eats slowly (remember Mr. Gladstone's habit of biting every piece of meat thirty-two times), and he never drinks till the meal is ended. And what are the "slender rations"? Eggs

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or fish for breakfast, a little tender meat or fowl for luncheon, soup, game, and vegetables for dinner, with farinaceous pudding, and soup and dry toast at bed-time. The middle classes ought to manage all this without becoming emaciated.

VII—*The Drama of the Letter-Box*

THE Deputy Postmaster-General of Victoria is my ideal of the official with a feeling heart. It is in his power to retrieve letters from the post, foolish letters written in haste, letters which, if delivered, will sunder young lives, or bring parental hairs in sorrow to the grave. When sufficient cause is shown why he should interpose, he will not allow the mill of routine to grind fond hearts to powder. He has been known to step into a breach that yawned between two lovers—an act that might entail alarming encroachments on his time, were it not that breaches of this kind commonly heal themselves. He has befriended a young man of evil habits, who had promised his parents to reform, and had posted to them a most virtuous letter, into which was inadvertently slipped a document of a different character. Severe moralists might say that in the interests of truth, the Deputy Postmaster-General ought not to have interfered. How was he to know that when that reprobate recovered the damning enclosure, he would keep his vow of amendment? When my Uncle Toby swore,

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the Recording Angel blotted out the bad word with a tear. But would he have felt justified in extracting from the nearest post-office a letter full of hypocritical pretences of noble sentiments and good deeds?

If our own Postmaster-General were asked to follow the Victorian example, I suppose he would plead abstract morality (a capital subject for Parliamentary debate) or the sanctity of official time. Distressed citizens who wanted their letters back might find Lord Londonderry too much occupied with graver matters. But why should he miss such a chance of winning enduring popularity? Once it was known that he was willing to rescue people who have the trick of posting compromising letters, I believe there would be a large demand for his statuette as a paper-weight. Whenever we sat down to our correspondence, we should look into his benevolent features (cast with a slightly sad expression in terracotta) and pick our phrases with unwonted care. There would have to be some decentralisation, of course. It would not be sufficient to empower postmasters all over the country to return letters to the writers. It is not in the sober day or the gentle twilight that we pen those missives which rob us of the heart's

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treasure, or lead to actions for slander. It is after midnight that the mood is worst. Have I not seen distracted women wringing their hands in front of insensate pillar-boxes at half-past two? The postman who makes the three o'clock collection, it is he who should have authority to assuage delirium and reward repentance in the lamp-light of the winter morning, or the rosy flush of the summer dawn.

Think what a boon this would be to the dramatist. He seldom dares to create a misunderstanding out of a letter, for although the public will stand some old theatrical devices, it grows restive when the hero comes down to the footlights, and reads the heroine's final farewells, which everybody knows she does not mean. But suppose the dramatist were to take my hint about the pillar-box? Scene, a London street; time, three A.M. The heroine, in a charming tea-gown, over which she has hastily thrown a valuable Indian shawl, gazes distractedly into the aperture of a pillar-box, and wrings her beautiful hands, one of which has a picturesque inkstain on the forefinger. (The actress may object to this detail; but the author must point out that it indicates reckless emotion in a manner that will strike

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home to many bosoms in the pit.) She explains in broken words that a letter of sixteen sheets which will ruin her happiness has gone through the aperture, which preserves a mocking indifference. Dawn (by Mr. Hawes Craven) appears gradually behind a steeple. A manly tread is heard; enter the postman, who proceeds to unlock the pillar-box. She appeals to him; he shakes his head; how is he to tell that she will claim the right letter? "It is large," she says; "it is sixteen sheets!" He offers rough consolation. "P'raps he won't read it, mum!" "Man!" she cries, "is your stupid obstinacy to wreck my life!" He is angry. "Stupid, is it? Not so stupid as you think. Some people I've heard of are fond of priggish other people's postal orders!"

Here, you see, is a truly dramatic situation. Elemental passions are in conflict; duty is confronted by despair. The church clock strikes the quarter; the street lamp burns dim. The audience is greatly excited, and even the impassive gentleman who has charge of the orchestral drum gasps for breath. A stately tread is heard, and there enters a tall figure in evening dress. "Lady Charlotte!" exclaims the stranger, but checks himself, and

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is about to pass on with a cold salutation, when she throws herself in front of him, and begs for her sixteen sheets. "Give this lady her letter," he says quietly to the postman. "I am the Postmaster-General." "I dessay!" says the postman. "Swell confederate, you mean!" More tension; there's nothing like holding an audience on the rack. Suddenly the heroine's inkstain steals into the pocket of her tea-gown (I don't know whether tea-gowns are made with pockets; any way this one is), and she brings out—the statuette! (Of course, the critics will say next morning that this is improbable; but what is more likely than that a distracted woman would rush out of the house at three in the morning with a paper-weight?) The stranger removes his hat, and with the aid of Mr. Hawes Craven's dawn, now broad day, discloses a sad expression exactly like the terra-cotta. "Beg pardon, my lord," says the postman humbly, "I thought it was a put-up job for postal orders." "You have done your duty," says the nobleman, but refrains from giving him a sovereign. The pit may not like this, and somebody in the gallery may cry "Shabby!" But I think the dramatist ought to enforce the principle that duty must

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be content with its official wages, especially the wages of a letter-carrier.

I need scarcely add that the sixteen sheets were addressed to the Postmaster-General himself, and that, had they reached him, they would have blighted his career at the very least. Thus his intervention at the pillar-box is dramatic in the highest degree. I have dwelt upon this incident because it may be useful to one of those playwrights who are about to solicit Mr. George Alexander's favour through the medium of the Playgoers' Club. Who knows that we may not see Mr. Alexander in the character of the Postmaster-General, and Mr. Tree as the sturdy postman? If you think the whole idea is too fantastic, let me suggest another reform for the benefit of hasty correspondents. I see a complaint that a too ingenious advertiser has inserted a phonograph in a figure which attracts public notice by acclaiming the virtues of some article of the toilette. This device may go rather far. I don't want to meet an automaton on casters, and hear him declare in a hollow voice the name of his bootmaker. But why not put the phonograph in the pillar-box? If Lady Charlotte, at three in the morning, as her jewelled but

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inkstained hand approaches the aperture, could hear the warning—"Don't be rash; think before you post it!"—I might have to give the touching story of her love-affair quite a different turn.

I may as well admit that this article forms part of a considerable work entitled "Hints to Dramatists." Another book, also on the eve of publication, I have called "Wrinkles for Novelists." In a recent novel by an eminent hand I find that a country house party, composed of twenty people, all famous for wit and observation, employs itself in hunting down the secret of an unfortunate married woman who is supposed to have a clandestine affair of the heart. The taste of this proceeding troubles the narrator of the story now and then, for, as he remarks to a friend, "You see it is none of our business." That does not prevent him from pursuing his course of vivisection, and describing with infinite relish how the victim flutters from one man to another in the vain hope of finding shelter. If you want to show your insight into the most subtle issues of social relations, you must "just drop in," like Paul Pry. You won't be so clumsy as Paul, but you will have all his native delicacy. I read a story lately

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in which a portrait painter, celebrated for his gift of revealing moral character on canvas, deliberately spoiled the portrait of a financial brigand to spare the feelings of his sitter's daughter. You must not write novels in that spirit. It is a concession to foolish sentiment.

VIII—*Cheap Food*

ANY observer of the town, notably within a radius of a quarter of a mile from Piccadilly Circus, must be struck by the growth of restaurants, and their marvellous cheapness. They start up every week, as it seems, in quiet streets off the great thoroughfares, and tempt the hungry citizen with a delectable array of courses at a merely nominal charge. There is one street through which I always pass at an accelerated pace, because the invitation, "Try Our Shilling Lunch," gives me a sense of personal abasement. I have not tried their shilling lunch, and the only reason is that I fear it would impose too severe a strain upon a judicial temper. I should be divided between the natural desire to appraise it at the value of a shilling, and no more, and a horrible suspicion that I was eating the restaurateur out of house and home. When the third course was set before me, I should watch him out of the corner of my eye, and see his lips pinched with anxiety. Members of his family would try to look careless in corners of the room, and all the time they would be wondering

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whether this voracious stranger would eat the whole of the absurdly bounteous meal, or leave anything for them. You remember Lewis Carroll's vision of the banker's clerk, who turned out to be a hippopotamus. "If this should stay to dine," he said, "there won't be much for us." How could I consume that shilling lunch if a similar reflection were passing through the minds of those who had provided it?

This is morbid sensitiveness, no doubt; but I manage to conquer it in a restaurant where the charge is eighteenpence. For this ridiculous sum you have a profusion of excellently cooked viands, admirable service, a spacious and cheerfully lighted room, and the smiles of the proprietor. He is a very swarthy man, with intensely black eyes, and in the costume of his country he would look, I am sure, a picturesque brigand. I have not questioned him about his ancestors, but I like to think that they were Sicilian brigands, and that his eighteenpenny lunch is a form of restitution. Many years ago a friend of mine was invited to a shooting party in Sicily. On the evening of his arrival, the host was called from dinner to see a stranger, with whom he transacted business. Then he brought this visitor into

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the dining-room and introduced him to the company. He was a very swarthy man, with intensely black eyes, who drank a glass of wine, saluted everybody gravely, and took his leave. "Gentlemen," said the host, "that is the chief of the local brigands. I have paid him his regular fee, he has made a careful note of you, so your lives will be quite safe to-morrow." "Safe!" murmured the company. "Oh, yes, it is the custom here. If I had not been able to pay the money down, one or more of you might have been shot." I like to imagine that my host of the restaurant is a descendant of that chief, and that the eighteenpenny lunch is a reparation to civilised society for his grandsire's method of ransom.

I imparted this theory to a friend who found me the other day at this economical repast. "Ah!" he exclaimed heartily; "you're a sensible man, Jaques, after all. Like me, you are always looking for a cheaper place to lunch at than the club. Clubs will break up, you may depend, if this restaurant competition is carried much further. A day will come when we shall dine sumptuously for sixpence, and then our club committees will begin to see their mistake." "You don't see your mistake," I remarked. "You are like the man

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in Gilbert's play, who, when he proposed to a girl, told her that his ideal in life was to find the nicest dinner for ninepence." "Sixpence," he muttered, eating at a great rate. "Let me tell you," I went on, "that I take this eighteen-penny lunch, which is ridiculous at the price—" "Quite right; not nearly enough of it"— "I say ridiculous at the price, for it might as well be given away." "Most true; why isn't it?" "I take it that I may play a humble but necessary part in a great drama of atonement." "My gracious!" he ejaculated, with his fork suspended in the air. "What have you been doing?" "Look in the *padrone's* face," I said. "Don't you see that he has had brigandage in his family?" Then I related the Sicilian story. He stared at the *padrone*, who at once approached the table, wreathed with smiles, and expressed the hope that we had enjoyed the fare. "Oh, very much so," said this rapacious clubman. "But my friend here thinks that, as you give so much for eighteenpence, you might as well give it for nothing. Yes," he added, struck by an idea; "why not celebrate the Coronation by keeping a free table?" The *padrone* considered this proposal for a moment, and then said, with a beautiful gesture of benevolence, "If the King will pay!"

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The King has already provided at his own cost for a Coronation dinner to half a million of his poorest subjects, and I don't think any further call can be made on his munificence. But are there no public bodies with spirit enough to make arrangements with these restaurants for, let us say, a week's rejoicing? In a certain street, instead of hurrying on with embarrassed gaze, I might pause, and cheerfully read this inscription: "To the King's Lieges. Try Our Coronation Lunch and Keep Your Shilling." I could try it without that sense of personal abasement of which I spoke anon. The thought that some spirited public body was paying the piper would be a legitimate source of refreshment. Moreover, it would give a romantic air to our municipal procedure. I am not enough of an antiquary to say how long it is since loyal corporations showed their enthusiasm for the crowning and anointing of the Sovereign by spreading good cheer for the populace in the open streets. Probably this custom had its most exhilarating observance at the Restoration. The mind goes fondly back to the times when oxen were roasted whole, and carved in the grand style, when liquor flowed from market-crosses, and no man was so poor as to lack a cup of canary.

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I say the imagination plays round such scenes without dwelling harshly either on the quality of the liquor, or on its possible disturbance to the social equilibrium. Romance touches the natural joy of the people with delicate fingers, and even history records no headaches.

I fear it would be difficult to revive these ancient revels. The idea of a beer-barrel broached in the street is repugnant to the modern spirit of decorum, and few citizens would have a relish for beer out of the gutter. The old market-cross, with spouting gargoyles, must have been a cheerful sight. At Edinburgh, I am told, it poured out a merry stream of claret in honour of King Charles, though the claret imported for this festival by careful burgesses may not have been the finest vintage. But where are the gargoyles in London, conveniently disposed for this public ministration? The luckless fountain in Piccadilly Circus, which affronts both beauty and utility with a feeble trickle, might fill its neglected basin with juice of a moderately generous grape. Or the grave and statesmanlike personage who has been brought from New York to brew his national cocktails in the American bar at the Criterion, might dedicate the fountain to the triumphs of his art. But the spirit of our

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licensing laws is opposed to these efforts to recreate our Merrie England. The Strand might flow with milk and honey without causing a breach of the peace, and Trafalgar Square fountains of ginger-beer might sparkle innocently in the sun. But I doubt whether these compromises with the old romance would command any favour. Indeed, an ox roasted whole in the Mile-end Road might be voted vulgar by local opinion.

Regretfully, then, we must dismiss the past. But the free restaurant for a week; does not that idea make philanthropy romantic? No luxurious feeding, mind; only the simple and abundant fare which these astonishing aliens provide for next to nothing. I believe that if they had a week's endowment, so that they could serve the public without charge, many a gouty citizen would be converted to frugal habits, and would bless the Coronation as the beginning of a new life.

IX—A *Famine in Books*

MACAULAY once said that the labour of reading a certain book he had under review was as hard as the labour of thieves on the treadmill. I have always thought that the author, who was horribly cut up on that occasion, might have retorted that the treadmill was just what such a reviewer deserved. But I have little heart to-day to invent repartees for authors, seeing that none of them offers me the treadmill or any other form of exercise. Here I sit without a solitary book to review, because the publisher chooses to suspend his business at this time of the year. He has the strange notion that people on their holidays don't need books, whereas it is plain, from the weather reports of all the holiday resorts in Europe, that the new book would be a perfect godsend to the poor soul who is immured indoors the livelong day by rain. However, it is not of his sufferings I am thinking, but of my own. I am not away for a holiday. I want to earn a livelihood by the discreet, luminous, and impartial exposition of the merits and demerits of current literature. But

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the bread is taken out of my mouth and out of other mouths which open reproachfully wide whenever I am near them. Pleasant for a father to overhear remarks like these in his well-disciplined household :—"Dad hasn't cut up a single book all this week!" "How do you know?" "'Cos mummy says there won't be any jam for a month!" No jam for these poor innocents! No pickled author on the sideboard! It is heartrending.

A wag of my acquaintance is fond of likening my honest industry to the behaviour of the wolf in the nursery story. Little Red Riding Hood, he says, pays me a call. She is a novel by a new hand, and has a pretty, timorous, appealing air. "Oh, grandmamma" (she takes me for her grandmother, poor simpleton!), "what very sharp eyes you have got!" "All the better to read you with, my dear!" "And oh, grandmamma, what very large teeth!" "All the better to ——"; the rest is pantomime, which greatly diverts the members of my family. But at this season the Little Red Riding Hoods leave off calling. Or give the allegory a more classic turn. Perseus is out of town, taking the waters at Homburg, or otherwise wasting his time. Andromeda is still in manuscript at her publishers, and the Dragon

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(I am the Dragon) snaps his jaws at nothing, a most unremunerative employment. Do you take my drift? Perseus is the reading public; Andromeda the romance that he and I have many a tussle over. I don't say the allegory is a perfect fit; but, at any rate, here's a poor old performing Dragon, neglected and hungry, and all because this is not the Andromeda season! Surely a scandal that demands the immediate notice of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. And I read letters in the daily papers, imploring householders not to repair thoughtlessly to the seaside, leaving the poor cat to starve in the empty mansion!

Yes, if you like, I will put off the airs of the Dragon, and come down to the estate of the harmless, necessary cat. Why should the careless publisher go out of town without providing a sufficient supply of new books to keep me moderately sleek? You have often laughed, I dare say, at the two cats in that ingenious poster on the hoardings, one of them in the pride of life and advertisement, and the other a lean, wretched creature, the victim of skim milk. Skim milk, indeed! But the cat who now addresses you has no milk whatever! I proposed to my editor last week to review over

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again some of the old books of the past season, with especial reference to the ignorant, reckless, and even flagitious manner in which they had been reviewed by other journals. "Skim milk!" he sneered. I will not repeat the forcible expletive wrung from me by despair. It caused the editor to turn on his heel. You may have noticed that when the haughty aristocrat in the novel has goaded his plebeian but high-spirited adversary to frenzy, he always turns on his heel. It is the mark of cynical breeding, and editors have it to perfection. My suggestion was a very good one. Nothing is so trying to a right-minded reviewer as the distemper of other reviewers. You have put an author in his proper place, and written beneath your handiwork the warning, "Cursed be he who moveth his neighbour's literary landmark!" and lo! another reviewer comes along and moves it without compunction. Some weeks ago I praised a novel with judicious heartiness, and straightway there appeared a review elsewhere, condemning the book without mercy, especially on the points I had cited for approbation. This reminds me of an incident which shows publishers in a new light. I met the publisher of this very novel, and he said, "I don't like it as much as you do. It

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is not nearly as interesting to me as your review." I know this anecdote will be received with incredulous scorn ; but it encourages me to believe that a publisher with so fine a mind must have a feeling heart. Why should he not hurry through the press next week a crowd of new books with no particular charm for him, solely that he may have that disinterested enjoyment which he confessed to me ? I see him pondering my notices of these works with an expression of rapt delight. What a lesson in altruism for the whole publishing world !

I had another scheme. Why not review imaginary books ? It has been done. Some renowned dissertations have sprung from this very artifice. A supposititious history of South America would make some lively writing about the customs of the Aztecs. An unreal edition of the works of Mrs. Aphra Behn, with introduction and notes by an Oxford professor, would be a capital peg for an essay on comparative modesty. You will scarcely believe that the scheme was vetoed on the ground that readers would ask for these publications at the libraries and booksellers, and, finding they had no existence, would complain of being hoaxed, and would view with distrust all other judgments in the same quarter, even upon such

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trivialities as politics and trade. After that I saw nothing for it but to write a letter to Mr. Carnegie. "Your deep interest in literature," I said to him, "is shown by your extraordinary bounty. I never open a newspaper without learning that you have endowed another free library, and brought fresh blessings on your name from people who cannot buy books, and would not if they could. Sir, you must be aware that the policy to which you have devoted your life and fortune does not inspire universal esteem. The powerful class of authors dislikes it, and the still more powerful class of publishers regards it with unconcealed animosity. But there is another class, not in the best odour with either of these, and therefore deserving of your generous consideration. I allude to reviewers. Their calling is singularly hard, for as they have to exercise impartial judgment they must deny themselves the license of the historian, the soul-flight of the poet, the fantasy of the novelist, and the garrulity of the biographer. Thus deprived of the attractions which appeal to most readers, they have to lead laborious lives of uncomplaining virtue. At this season of the year they have no books to review, and their children cry for bread. May I suggest that you should establish a Reviewers'

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Sustentation Fund, and endow it with five millions? The sum may seem rather large, but I must remind you that nobody but yourself is likely to subscribe, not even Mr. Passmore Edwards, for he has been a newspaper proprietor and editor, and is incapable of taking reviewers at their own valuation. Let me beg you to give this proposal your immediate and favourable attention. It is real philanthropy, and you must excuse me for remarking that your philanthropic zeal has not always been happily directed. P.S.—I am willing to act as Secretary of the Fund (at a reasonable salary), and to enter upon my duties at once.”

To this communication, I grieve to add, I have not yet received a reply.

X—*The Income Tax*

THIS is about the time when the Chancellor of the Exchequer girds himself for the horrid task of bleeding his helpless victims. I can see him examining his case of instruments with a callous smile. That insinuating blade with a twist and a curl, like a Malay creese, is the income tax. The handle, you will observe, is worn with much usage. It is the operator's favourite weapon ; for it lets out a great deal of innocent blood with a very slight exertion. That slender stiletto, reposing in a velvet corner, is the duty on cigars. Having but a moderate taste for tobacco, I cannot understand why this implement is always used so gingerly. It produces but a crimson drop or two, whereas it might the multitudinous seas incarnadine if it were handled by fearless justice. Let the Chancellor of the Exchequer call me in before he rolls up his sleeves for butchery, and I will show him how to cup the right people. Look across the Channel. The French Chamber has decided that if a man be worth many millions he shall pay half to the coffers of the State. There is said to be a commotion amongst the

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millionaires, but that moves me not a jot. If I had twenty millions, let us say, I would cheerfully give the State half, and live frugally on ten. How any reasonable man can want to debate such a proposition passes my comprehension.

The psychology of the Income Tax Commissioners has a fearsome interest for me. I take them to be kindly-disposed men in the ordinary relations of life. They have their share, no doubt, of the domestic joys, wives who love them, and children eager to walk in their footsteps. Their profession is the pursuit of truth, the most ennobling pursuit, you might say, if it were not upon the track of your income and mine. Then it becomes a subtle indelicacy. So far as I have observed, no consciousness of this disturbs the repose of the Commissioners. Without a blush they will offer you gentle incentives to pay your income tax several times over by making a return in every district in which you have any visible employment. I dare say this present article will provoke a shower of yellow papers, ending with an assessment of Jaques at some fabulous amount. An American friend of mine, with a domicile in London, had an interview with the Commissioners, who proposed to tax his invest-

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ments in the United States. He demurred to this, and after much discussion they waived the claim, but intimated that if he brought any money from America they would assess him on that. "Gentlemen," he said, "you are earnest seekers after the heart of things, and I will not deceive you. Whenever I go home and gather up a pile of dollars, I will cable you the exact figure, so that you can fix it up in a yellow paper, and make the Chancellor of the Exchequer a happy man. Yes, gentlemen, I give you the word of an American citizen that I shall not rest quietly in my grave until I have paid the whole cost of the South African war!"

But I am told there is a source of revenue that our Government inquisitors persistently neglect. The banks are said to revel in a wealth of unclaimed balances. A man forgets all about his money in one bank, and opens an account at another. Or he sells his securities, deposits the proceeds with a banker, and then disappears. Years afterwards a trader, blown out of his course in the South Sea islands, lights upon a strange outcast with matted hair, a white man who has forgotten his native speech, all except the words "Bank has got it!" which he mutters with an uncanny chuckle. Your

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old-fashioned miser, who led his relatives an exasperating dance by hiding his gold under hearthstones, or in the trunks of trees, was a very poor bungler at a practical joke. As often as not his ghost haunted the spot where the treasure was buried, and then somebody with a sound nervous system came and dug it up. But to leave your fortune in a banker's safe, and then lose your wits in Polynesia, is a refinement of eccentricity that puts all the ancients to shame. Still, it is the lapse of memory that is most remarkable. I can never forget my balance at the bank, for the inexorable deductions that make it dwindle are my daily fare of mental arithmetic. The wonder is that the august corporation which is good enough to take charge of it should employ a staff of clerks to post it in their ledgers.

I appeal to my suffering brethren who are in the same case. Why should we be taxed to the bone when these wayward sons of fortune leave riches untold without an owner? The Government might take their unclaimed balances and lighten our burdens. Or they might be divided amongst deserving citizens on the principle of awarding the largest proportion to those who can be proved to have given their bankers the greatest trouble with the smallest

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accounts. Amongst this company of estimable veterans I see myself in an honourable and lucrative place. My claim is all the more pressing because it has been plain to me for some time that Jaques has a special dignity. I notice that the beautiful ladies who adorn the centre of this *Daily Chronicle* page are always looking my way. Even when they are just married, and enveloped with their wedding drapery, they forget the bridegrooms, and shyly solicit my approval. This makes me uneasy about my own wardrobe, which is by no means befitting to a man who is honoured by these fair speechless messages. Moreover, I learn from the expert who writes in the *Pall Mall Magazine* that the "well-dressed man" must spend at least £400 on his original outfit, and £120 a year in keeping it up. True, you can be "reasonably clothed" for £90 and £50 a year for maintenance; but what would those ladies think of me if I stooped to such a compromise?

The *Pall Mall* expert says he knew "a very distinguished man whose wife, being of a frugal mind, bought some cloth, and made him a pair of trousers; but he became so tired of the constant question as to whether he was trying to introduce the Turkish fashions into London, that he gave the garment to the Hindu cross-

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ing-sweeper of St. James's Square." This impressive anecdote would deter the most cautious temperament from economy. I abandon myself to the luxury of imagining that I already possess a fur coat, with Persian lamb collar and cuffs, and mink linings, together with much raiment for display in town and country, including three pairs of white hunting-breeches, and six pairs of white duck trousers. I have eighteen dress shirts, and as many white silk handkerchiefs, eighteen pairs of black silk half-hose at twelve-and-six a pair, and three suits of silk pyjamas at fifty shillings a suit. I have lots of hats, including an opera hat. Some people think that opera hats have gone out; but they came back, because "more silk hats were spoilt at a theatre than in church." Ha! then the opera hat is an economy. Away with it! I will wear only silk hats at the play. Nay, I will be known as the man who is never seen twice in the same hat. Yes, the opera hat must go, and also the "bowler." It is unsuited to my *chevelure*, and is surely the most hideous headpiece that ever was invented. My hatter shall make a new hat from my design; it shall be known as the "Jaques," and be worn by all the brethren who are resolved to have justice from the Exchequer.

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A much-respected ecclesiastic once assured me that he came into possession of a valuable fur coat in a singular way. He had done some service to an Oriental people by thrusting their wrongs into the faces of apathetic statesmen. One day he received a letter from a remote part of Asia, begging him to accept a small token of gratitude. Presently there arrived a box of furs, and my friend thought they would be useful for a winter coat. When he took them to the furrier, it occurred to him to ask how much they were worth. The furrier smiled, and said, "I won't tell you what I think they are worth; but if you wish to sell them, I will give you three hundred pounds." The ecclesiastic was startled, for the Orientals he had befriended have a reputation for hard bargains, and not for open-handed sentiment. He goes about now wrapped in a costly tribute from some unknown Asiatic; and I wonder whether a little pamphleteering on behalf of a lost tribe of Israel will bring me a similar reward. Can I take up the cause of some down-trodden Persian lamb, and get its grateful wool for nothing?

XI—“*Clouds of Glory*”

STEVENSON, as Mr. Graham Balfour has just reminded us, had a most retentive memory of his childhood. Everything that concerned himself from the earliest years had for him that romantic interest that is usually reserved for personages in fiction. He attributes this somewhere to the imaginative sensitiveness of an only child, and I wonder that this particular branch of inquiry has not been followed up by scientific students of the human mind. It would be interesting to know whether a small dog, supposing it to be the only puppy of its hearth and home, is more introspective than a puppy with the customary number of brothers and sisters. I mention this merely because it seems to be the kind of illustration that would naturally occur to any one who took the subject very seriously as a part of the evolutionary scheme. We read a great deal about eldest sons, especially in relation to the pleasing custom of primogeniture, so characteristic of a civilisation that boasts of securing “equal opportunities for all”; and we also read a great deal about younger sons,

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their adventures in the colonies, and their disabilities for matrimony of the highest class. But I should like to see only sons form a learned society, so that the "Transactions of the O.S.," published quarterly, might enlighten us as to the comparative intensity of this preoccupation with childhood's trivial, fond records.

From inquiries that I have cautiously prosecuted I gather that most men are very shy with such early reminiscences. They do not say to you, with a far-away backward light in their eyes, "Ah! yes. I will tell you a vastly interesting thing that happened on the day I was short-coated." If you ever get that information, it is from a maiden aunt, or from an old family retainer; and if the story should be told in the man's presence, ten to one he denies it, or professes that it has escaped his memory. A friend of mine took me aside, and said, "You writing fellows have to do strange things for a living, so I suppose your curiosity about my childhood is all in the game of literature and science. If you pledge your word never to reveal my name, I will tell you my earliest recollection. Very well. Looking back I see a ship lying in the docks of some great seaport—I think it is New

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York. The shades of evening fall. Over the ship's side steals a very small urchin down the gangway to the quay. He belongs to the vessel in some capacity, I forget what; the captain may have been his father. He secretes himself in a barrel, containing a deposit of sugar, rich brown sugar. Very late that night, about half-past nine, there is an alarm on the ship; the crew run hither and thither; they peer into the dark waters as if expecting to see a drowned body; a woman wrings her hands. Presently the boatswain spies the barrel; he looks in; the boy is snatched up and clasped in his mother's arms. There is rejoicing, there is spanking, there is a dose of rhubarb magnesia. Ugh!”

That man is a K.C., and I shall be greatly astonished if he does not become Lord Chancellor. Another friend, high up in the medical profession, remarked when we were discussing this subject, “Have you noticed that I never eat apple-dumpling? Well, I once ate an apple-dumpling that memory cannot digest. It was at boarding-school, where I had a habit of early rising. While the dormitory was still wrapped in slumber I would dress quietly, omitting the washing, which was too noisy, and wander out into

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the garden to watch the mist rolling up from the river. One morning I strayed inadvertently into the kitchen, and opened a cupboard. A cold apple-dumpling was there. Unused to crime, I hesitated; but all was quiet; the mist was still on the river. I listened at the foot of the stairs; but nothing came down save a gentle snort, most likely from the mathematical master in a dream. I ate that apple-dumpling. A few hours later it was missed. The boys in my dormitory testified to my suspicious habit of rising early. I explained that I wanted to see the mist roll up from the river. The cruel part of it was that I had not really cared for the dumpling, which gave to my love of nature the air of hungry pilfering. After that, whenever I was restless at dawn, a head would pop up and cry, 'Hullo! no dumpling!' and promptly the whole room would pounce on my clothes. I never saw the mist roll up again. I never ate dumpling again."

You perceive that these memories deal with illicit eating, although, in the doctor's case, there was a higher thought, clogged unhappily by the sceptical materialism that surrounded him. It will be worthy of note, when his biography comes to be written, that through-

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out his professional life he set his authority against heavy puddings. Thus has he turned the irony of a childish humiliation to the disinterested service of his species. I know a novelist who, after taking my pledge to conceal his identity, admitted that he owed his earliest inspiration to the unconscious weight of three mature ladies in a four-wheeled cab. “I had run an errand for my mother,” he said, “and as I was crossing a street, the cab knocked me down, and went over my right leg. Two benevolent strangers picked me up, and took me home in a carriage. On the way I heard one remark that the three old women in the cab could not have weighed together less than six hundred pounds. When the doctor examined my leg, it was found, to the general surprise, not to be broken. I can still see the benevolent strangers looking at me respectfully. ‘Six hundred pounds, plus the weight of the cab!’ they exclaimed, ‘This lad’s bones must be made of uncommon stuff.’ Then they congratulated my mother, who smiled proudly through her tears.”

Here he paused, and I said, “Very interesting; but, as you have not developed into a Sandow, what is the point of the anecdote?”

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"Oh, the impatience of journalism!" said he. "You don't give a man time to unfold his story according to the rules of art." He turned on his heel, and walked away, and I tried in vain to connect the heavy old ladies and the marvellous leg with the beginning of that talent which delights a multitudinous public with legends of blood and blackmail. Next day we met again, and he resumed quite cheerfully, "Short story in two parts. Part Two. My mother, as the kind reader may not have forgotten, was proud of her boy. But the expression of her face was soon changed to terror. My leg had swollen enormously; it was the leg of Daniel Lambert. Observe the quaint felicity of this image. Lambert, if I remember rightly, weighed over forty stone, and that was about the fighting weight of the three old ladies who had done me this unpremeditated wrong. But it was not the size of my leg that appalled my anxious mother. I had fallen into an uneasy slumber, and was awakened by a pricking sensation in the monstrous limb. My eyes started from my head, for they fell upon a scene at which the stoutest heart might have blenched." "Cheek," I corrected; "hearts don't blench." "Very well," he said. "That's

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the reviewer all over! Good morning." You may not believe it, but I had to ask him to lunch to get the rest of the narrative. "Part Three," he continued after his third glass of port. "My mother and I were pale as death, but the doctor did not seem to mind. On my leg were three black palpitating things, gorging my blood. They dropped off, one after the other, leaving a thin red trickle. Three thin red trickles! Leeches," he added solemnly. "Now you know what turned my mind, even in the golden glow of boyhood, to the darker side of life."

Here are three typical cases of reminiscence, not without value to a judgment upon character and opportunity. But the men who told me these stories under pressure would never dream of telling them in general society. The personal experiences they like to relate are sophisticated, full of what they suppose to be ripe wisdom. Moreover, for most of us our childhood is another existence, by-gone and forgotten. Here and there a sensitive temperament has preserved impressions of that embryonic stage, calls up scenes at will, analyses, a little morbidly perhaps, characteristics which had their germs in the well-remembered sensations of the child.

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Sometimes this is simply a melancholy review ; sometimes it is a discipline. But considering that the child is always father to the man, there is a widespread unconsciousness of the paternity.

XII—*America at Oxford*

MANY years ago I had a school-mate who went to Oxford. He is now an ornament of the Church, a man of broad views, who gives his parishioners vigorous fillips of common sense. Weather-beaten souls (with eminent names), tossed from spire to spire by variable winds of doctrine, sit under him often, as if they found his pulpit a comforting lighthouse. But such is the perversity of the secular mind, or if you like the phrase better, such is the tenacity of the trivial which, for some of us, is a substitute for a more useful memory, that whenever I listen to him discoursing on the pitfalls of modern life, I murmur reproachfully, "Oh yes, my dear fellow, but you never warned me against that 'cup'!" Thereby hangs a tale which carries me back to the time when I paid him a visit at Oxford, and, in the common room of his college, helped him to consume a modest supply of a comfortable ale called "archdeacon," which, I have no doubt—such is the power of Oxford tradition—is still performing archidiaconal functions. Not at that does memory point a querulous finger.

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It was the mysterious "cup," my friend, brewed for the luncheon you gave to a party of which I was the humblest member. Beauty was there with her mother—*matre pulchrâ filia pulchrior*, as one undergraduate remarked with academic propriety. A taste for letters was naturally conspicuous at your table. Would that we had drunk nothing but the Pierian spring!

For some demon was in that "cup." It stood, I remember, in the middle of the table, in a large glass vessel, of chaste design. Its tint was amber; in its lucent depths there lurked green foliage, symbol of the vine. You see I am moved to blank verse by the thought of it. You had the pleasant fantasy to send it round and round the board as a loving bowl, which we grasped with both hands in turn; and when Beauty put it to her lips, at least one person in the company wanted to quote—

"Or leave but a kiss within the cup,
And I'll not ask for wine,"

but was quelled by the maternal eye. Ah! had there been only kisses in that "cup"! To what malevolent sprite did you confide the brewing? Suddenly a mist enveloped the table, and when it had cleared away, Beauty and her mamma had vanished. You were in

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the midst of a deeply interesting anecdote of the Master of your college when this obscurity came over us. Alas! the tale was never finished, and instead of the burst of discreet merriment, which would have been its due, there came the gasping question, "What, in heaven's name, is it made of?" as several haggard men sat staring at the witches' caldron which had undone the decorous feast.

This sad adventure came back to me when I was at Oxford the other day, and chanced to make the acquaintance of an American family. At this season Oxford is given over to Americans, who take placid possession, as they do of Stratford-on-Avon, making the stray English visitor feel that he is an interloper. They are not millionaires. You do not meet Mr. Pierpont Morgan in the cloisters. Mr. Carnegie, who is fond of telling American youth that reading novels in free libraries is an excellent use of their time, but that the ancient classics can tell them nothing save the crimes and follies of Greek and Roman savages—well, you don't run against Mr. Carnegie at Oxford. But there is more than a sprinkling of the people Mr. W. D. Howells describes so admirably—the Americans who are not bursting with new inventions or with projects for buying the

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universe. They are simple enough to be impressed by the age of our institutions, and in the shadow of the college towers they are not troubled about the pace or the price of things. They look like gentle strangers from a somewhat arid climate, to whom you can safely tell that old story about the rolling and watering of the green sward in the college "quad." Indeed, I tried it on my American family with perfect impunity. "Yes," I said, "one of your compatriots asked a gardener how he made the grass so green, and he answered, 'Well, we lays it down about the Middle Ages, and we sows it, and looks at it a bit, and the Wars of the Roses comes along, and Old Noll; but they don't make no difference, for we goes on a-rollin' and a-waterin' until we get it just as green as you see.'"

They laughed at this in a most comforting way. Some Americans you meet give you the idea that their country manufactures all the jokes for home consumption, and exports the surplus. But my new acquaintances had that freshness of mind which perceives the underlying gravity of our humour—the depth of the roots, so to speak, whence springs the spreading chestnut-tree. Charmed with such simplicity, to which one might have quoted

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“Evangeline” without running the risk of being told that it was “a back number,” I accompanied them on the river, and guided them up the little tributary stream that runs by the tower of Magdalen. Term was over, but here and there was still a studious youth curled up in a punt under a tree, pondering some classic tome with knitted brows. I explained that this was the custom of the place, a rigid law, indeed, which had never been broken save by a rash undergraduate, who brought a fair damsel one day to destroy the academic peace. She persisted in mismanaging his punt, making it circle in the narrow stream, until her graceful figure and her large eyes drew all the students out of the groves to “bump” the punt solely for the pleasure of apologising to this attractive intruder. “A shocking scene,” I added, “which greatly agitated the University; but such is the force of tradition in Oxford that no enactment was needed to prevent a repetition of this incident. The spirit of culture overcame that passing weakness. Even the rash undergraduate grew to be a recluse. At one time he had set the flippant example of naming punts after the heroines of the lighter poets. When you saw him reclining in a craft called *Who is Sylvia?*

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you were not surprised to note that he was reading a newspaper rather pink in colour. But he re-christened his boat *Minerva*, and I don't think that during term there is anything more feminine on the river."

During this improving discourse the American paterfamilias looked thoughtfully at his son, a boy of fourteen, who blushed under his father's gaze, as American boys still blush in the novels of Mr. Howells. His sister rallied him gently, and then said to me, "He just colours up because he knows what poppa is thinking about. Poppa wants to put him under that tree with a good, solid book, and make sure that he don't look up when any girl comes along, and makes a punt go round and round, and every boy's head go round with it!" "That's what I shall expect of him when he comes here," said his father gravely. "He's young," I remarked; "you are looking ahead." "We Americans always look ahead," he retorted. It was the first touch of national spirit I noticed in him. "When he has had a course at Yale, I expect him to win a Rhodes scholarship in our State, and come to Oxford. Nothing is overlooked, Mr. Jaques. I have even chosen the college he is to enter." When I heard its name I had

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a sudden misgiving. Perhaps I turned a little pale, for he said, "Have you anything to say against it? Isn't it as good as the others?" The boy looked at me anxiously, and a shade of mistrust came into his sister's eyes. "Excellent college," I stammered. "It sends the cream of English youth into all the professions, especially the Church. The archdeacon is particularly good and not too strong." "But I don't want to be an archdeacon," said the boy. "No career for archdeacons in our State," said his father. I explained that "archdeacon" was the college ale, and told them what Sydney Smith said about archidiaconal functions, and they laughed joyously. Bless the simplicity which can still laugh at Sydney Smith!

But oh, my boyhood's friend, you who warn me from the pulpit against pitfalls, what am I to say to these simple Americans about that "cup"? How can I let the lad go to your college without arming him against the perils lurking in a large glass vessel, of chaste design? Nobody believes in magic potions now. Love philtres are scoffed at. But don't tell me there was nothing uncanny in that smiling liquor which played such havoc with our wits.

XIII—*Men and Modes*

NO man, I take it, is a hero to his tailor. As may have been in the picturesque times when Horace Walpole sat down to breakfast in partridge-coloured silk hose; for man used to ruffle it then in finery which made him a redoubtable rival of woman in the feminine arts. He loved colours, and had the courage to wear them. As late as the Reform Bill he was still leading the fashions; and it was what D'Orsay wore that took the public eye, not the drapery of the reigning beauty. Disraeli made an indelible impression on a contemporary chronicler as "the man in the green trousers." Dickens was heroic in a fancy waistcoat, running over with gold chains. Nobody dreamed of the coming era when the sceptre of fashion would be yielded absolutely to woman, and men would be content to dress with a sheeplike and unobtrusive monotony. Why, it is within living memory that young bucks swaggered down Piccadilly in check trousers of a pattern which provoked the joyous comment of the street-boy. Who dares to wear them now? Save for a sprightly

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waistcoat here and there, we are all clad in such sad-coloured raiment that a Puritan of Cromwell's time, if he came to life again, would think the reign of the Latter-Day Saints had indeed begun. I hope he would not stay long enough to discover his error.

Now all this makes a melancholy show for any tailor with taste and initiative. I see that the organ of his enterprising trade ascribes our poor spirit to "the modesty of the average man." This deplorable weakness hinders the adoption of some happy suggestions. For instance, it is proposed that for evening dress we should sparkle, like Dizzy, in green trousers, or plum, or crimson. A crimson suit now would go uncommonly well with black eyes and a swarthy complexion. Are you fair, my young friend? Does a boyish pink still mantle on your cheek in moments of emotion? Then pale blue is your tint for evening wear. For myself I fancy plum; it would give a rich but gentle flush to a complexion which is a trifle autumnal. What say you, O comrades of the Middle Age? Does not this idea revive in your jealous bosoms some hope of cutting a dash in the shining eyes which wander over us at present as in-

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differently as if we were pillar-boxes or policemen? Shall not each of us say:—

“ I do mistake my person all this while ;
Upon my life, she finds, although I cannot,
Myself to be a marvellous proper man.
I'll be at charges for a looking-glass,
And entertain some score or two of tailors,
To study fashions to adorn my body” ?

To wit, the plum-coloured suit, or the vermillion, or the silver-grey ! And what holds us back when such a prospect to the impulsive ardour gives the charge ? Nothing but “ the modesty of the average man ” !

An observant woman has made the shrewd remark that if men were more careful of their dress they might develop the national character. They might be more adaptive in their commercial methods, more alert and novel in their exports. Surely, there were more ideas in circulation when men wore green trousers ! That everlasting black coat at dinner ; what does it typify but a spiritless acquiescence in the humdrum ? Minds are reduced to one pattern ; we are as much alike as the houses in Gower Street. Every citizen is expected to carry an umbrella, and is deemed eccentric when he takes his neighbour's. The really original man never has an umbrella. Dizzy

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never had an umbrella. "When it comes on to rain," he explained, "I take shelter under the umbrella of the first pretty woman I see." Who has the courage now for such impudence, or the genius to make it agreeable? What services might we not render to our country—to literature, science, and the arts—if we broke up this desperate sameness of garb, and radiated in divers colours! Don't talk to me about "the modesty of the average man"! That can be overcome by organisation. I do not undertake to appear at an evening party, or to sit in Mr. George Alexander's stalls, in my suit of softly glowing plum without a little backing. We must form a brotherhood; it might be called the Prismatic League; and the members should be sworn never to dine in the plain black garments of an effete generation. When this became known, hostesses would be eager to invite the Prismatics for the sake of the novelty; and then we should be enabled to spread our civilising message.

Of course, a reform of this character would run some initial risk of misconception. In a crush of arriving guests in the hall, you might overhear something like this: "I had no idea that our host kept so many pampered menials."

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“And all in different liveries, too! But some of them must be strangers. There’s a footman over there in scarlet.” “The Royal livery! The King’s here!” “Pooh! That fellow must be one of the musicians—the Red Manchurian Band. Wonder whether he plays the tom-tom or the sackbut.” He looks moderately civilised; let’s ask him.” Thereupon an inquiring youth, with a bland smile, accosts you: “Speak English?” “Certainly.” “That’s all right. Going to give us your native wood-notes wild, eh? What’s the national instrument of Manchuria—reed or brass?” “Can’t say; but you would do very well as a tinkling cymbal.” “Hullo!” says the bland youth. “Don’t you belong to the Red Manchurian Band?” “Certainly not. I am a member of the Prismatic League!” Such a misunderstanding might retard the movement for a short time. It would be still more embarrassing to be mobbed by nocturnal roysterers, and arrested by the police as the cause of the disturbance. Imagine an interview next morning with Mr. Plowden, who avows in his book that he has a severe eye for people with “abnormal ears.” What would he say to the dishevelled but innocent Leaguer in evening green? Mr. Plowden:

“What is the meaning of this masquerade?” The Leaguer: “No masquerade, I assure you. I was going peacefully home last night after a dinner-party——” Mr. Plowden: “Were they all dressed like you?” The Leaguer (impressively): “By no means! That would be quite contrary to the principles of the League. Some of us were in red, some in yellow. My friend Jaques, in his favourite plum, looked perfectly——” Mr. Plowden: “Is this a League of Mad Hatters or Crazy Tailors?”

It is always difficult to reason with a magistrate; but when so much is at stake the attempt must be made. The Leaguer: “Will you permit me to explain, sir? I am a member of the Prismatic League; and it is our cardinal principle that for evening dress we shall choose all the colours of the rainbow.” Mr. Plowden (looking at his Clerk, and tapping his forehead): “Dear me! Very sad case!” The Leaguer (with dignity): “You are quite mistaken, Mr. Plowden. All our members are as sane as I am.” (Voice at the back of the court: “I tell yer my ’usband was worse than that. ’E used to crawl on the roof in his shirt and mew!”) The Leaguer (persuasively): “The object of the League, Mr. Plowden, ought to appeal especially to

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you." Mr. Plowden (with gentle forbearance): "Indeed!" The Leaguer: "Yes, sir. You say in your excellent book that the police-magistrate cannot impress the public as he ought because he wears no distinguishing mark of his judicial office. Now if you were dressed like me——" (Great laughter. Mr. Plowden shakes his head, and murmurs, "Poor fellow!") The Leaguer: "Of course, sir, I mention that only by way of respectful illustration, and not to excite that mirth in your court which you so much deplore. Briefly, my case is this: the Prismatics have banded themselves together to break the monotony of evening dress, and so impart to the national character that variety, and that original impulse, which in these days of foreign competition it sorely needs. Last night I was dining for this great purpose——" Mr. Plowden: "Never mind; that will do now. You are remanded for medical inquiries." This incident, with its ramifications, including leading articles in all the papers, and a contribution by Sir James Crichton-Brown to the *British Medical Journal*, would wrap the cause in gloom for a while. But we should not be discouraged, and we should refuse the invitation to appear at the leading music-halls for enormous salaries.

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I foresee a time when the movement will be triumphant, and will take its place in the chronicles of fashion which eclipses the first-night notices of a new play. "In a brilliant audience," I shall read with complacency, "the men's costumes, as usual, far surpassed the toilettes of the ladies in brilliancy and audacity of design. That great social reformer, Jaques, it is true, wore his characteristic and historical plum. But Mr. Plowden was the observed of all observers in his judicial robes—green slashed with yellow, and capriciously picked out with crimson."

XIV—*Country Life*

I HAVE a friend, a distinguished writer, who has lately surprised me by a sudden and seemingly incurable passion for the country. Town I imagined to be his life-blood; and as for nature, I should have thought there was enough of that for a man who lived within bird-call of Kensington Gardens. But he has lately taken a house in Surrey, and there I found him dispensing bread, and an allocution dimly suggestive of St. Francis, to an assemblage of hungry birds on the lawn. "My dears," said he, "this person who has just arrived is a sad illustration of what I have been telling you about the canker-worm of life in cities. You need not hop; it is not a nice worm; it is a bitterly unprofitable worm from which you would turn with a shudder. My friend here, in the pride of his blindness, thinks I am having a mighty dull time, and he is going to amuse me with flotsam and jetsam from the Dead Sea gaiety of London. He will sneer in his bland way at the calm of this beautiful garden, and at you, my little parishioners, to whose temporal wants I delight to minister, whilst you teach

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me how much the human pastor may learn from the feathered laity. Yes, he will laugh at us; but we have our laughter too, wiser and deeper, for out of his own newspapers we can confound his boasted philosophy!"

Here he diverged to the columns of a journal, and read to me some official statistics about the alarming growth of urban population. "My dear Jaques," he proceeded, "don't you see that if this goes on there won't be elbow-room in London? It is no use clamouring for wider streets; all these millions of human beings will choke your new avenues. When I took my last walk in Piccadilly, I saw a despairing notice to pedestrians, jutting from a lamp-post: 'Keep to the Right.' Imagine that emblem of order in the rapids of Niagara! Now what is the plain duty of the citizen? Manifestly to reduce the congested mass by living in the country. Sir, I am a pioneer. You come down from town with your ineffable air of being up-to-date, never suspecting that you are lagging miserably behind the wisdom even of statistics. And you smile—don't contradict me—I say you smile in a patronising way on my rural contentment, although I have done you a service by yielding to you my dwindling

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share of the London pavement!" At this point a servant appeared with a fresh loaf, which was promptly broken and scattered among the birds. "That's the fourth loaf this morning," remarked the pioneer's wife thoughtfully. "Our baker is baking himself to death. The seedsman is out of bird-seed, and has sent to town for a sack. He has also sent for goldfinches from Seven Dials. He says that since we came the local industries have fairly hummed."

My friend took a few animated strides. "Mark," he said, "what one can do with a resolute purpose to revive the prosperity of the agricultural districts." "But why keep goldfinches?" I asked respectfully. "Because canaries have no character," he answered. "Besides, I have a scheme for winning the confidence of all these wild creatures that you see. It would never occur to you." "Salt on their tails," I murmured. "When I have trained the goldfinches," he continued, ignoring the interruption, "to eat out of my hand, the sight will tame the others." "With a handful of crumbs you can make the intimate acquaintance of any sparrow in Kensington Gardens," I said. "Pooh! man. You know as little of bird-life as the people who write

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books on ornithology. There are no wild birds in Kensington Gardens. The place is an enervating aviary, for the birds are brought up there without their natural enemies. Pampered puppets of nursemaids and children, they have never known the stimulating perils of freedom. You might as well study the birds that sing on the stage in a woodland scene in Shakespeare." "He spends a whole morning watching our birds through an opera-glass," remarked his wife. "I have watched nightingales through an opera-glass," I said. "In the 'Country Girl' at Daly's——" "Look at those chaffinches," my host broke in. "The same pair honour my wife's 'At Home' every day. I feel as if I had pronounced the benediction on their nuptials, and I would swear in any court to their conjugal fidelity. I knew a case in which a little acid was dropped on the feathers of two chaffinches, leaving a crimson spot on each. They were never seen apart." "With such a brand of publicity," I suggested, "they would scarcely venture."

Here the servant brought a large plate of toast. "Too much bread, you know," explained my hostess, "is rather gouty; so we distribute toast, and escape the task of tying up

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inflamed claws with red flannel." "And thus miss an opportunity of fostering another local industry. But toast seems to demand a deal of pecking," I added, as the chaffinches retired baffled from a huge slice. "What about beak-ache?" "Your ignorance of birds, my dear chap," put in the host, "is truly urban. You will be wondering next how these birds can eat so much. Pray consider the muscular energy needed to sustain them on the wing and keep up the flow of song." "Think of the tits," said his wife, "and their perpetual tittering." "Prima donnas, I have heard, require copious supplies of stout and oysters." "Well, imagine what they would require if they had wings." My friend took a few more strides, and peered into a tree. "If you were an observant man, Jaques," he said, "you would see papa blackbird now giving young master blackbird a lesson in piping. How many ornithologists can tell you that when the young blackbird is turned out of the parental nest to shift for himself he will come back at the end of a year and receive this tuition from his father? The domestic affections of birds offer a lesson which is wasted on man." "And the cuckoo——" I began. "The cuckoo," said he, "is a freak.

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You should observe the true paterfamilias of the foliage when he is commanded by his spouse to sit on the eggs in her brief absence. He catches your eye, and tries to hide his crest, pretending to be a hen. Mamma returns, scolds him for his clumsiness, and resumes her place in a grand maternal way, while he sits deferentially on a twig and pacifies her with a trill. It is a family picture that might soften the most callous heart."

We were now joined by a neighbour with a wistful eye, who is no novice in the country, and I was struck by the relish with which he narrated capital anecdotes of town life, lapsing into impassive silence when my friend made a fresh excursion into the habits of birds. We were soon deep in reminiscences of the theatre, and of wayward figures in society. In driving from the station I had noticed the new post-office, and my flyman had informed me that, a stingy Government having refused to bear the whole cost of the building, a benevolent duchess had subscribed the balance. "Quite true," said the neighbour, "and to crown the obligation she might sit on a stool and sell stamps." "Heavens!" said my host with a gesture of disdain. "Don't talk as if you were craving for a fashionable bazaar in the

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Botanical Gardens. See! Here's a starling.
He brings luck.

'Now I must tell you of the starling ;
He really is a perfect darling :
When you're feeling weak and ill
He comes and soothes you with his bill.'

Tell us about your beautiful green snake," he added, turning to the neighbour. "Ah! yes," responded the other wearily. "My youngster had a green snake, which was sent from town in a box. He thought it would fascinate frogs, and possibly swallow them. But the day of its arrival it crept into my wife's work-basket and was found dead with a reel of cotton in its jaws. We buried it with funeral rites. If you come to my place I'll show you the grave."

The pastimes of the country seem to me a little sombre. I hinted this to my friend's wife, and she said, "Not for the birds and the animals. For a week or two after we came, all the domestic pets of our landlord, who had moved out for us, called regularly at tea-time, especially the Angora cat, which preferred cream to milk. You have seen how contented the birds are. And I don't think the sports are sombre for the baker and the seedsman."

XV—At a Woman's Club

I HAVE been forced to tell Olivia that I cannot take tea at her club any more. This is a considerable privation to me, for Olivia is at her best about five o'clock, and whips the cream of the *beau monde* with vivacious art. I do not say that the *beau monde* belongs conspicuously to Olivia's club, which is the haunt of ladies in the learned profession, chiefly the feminine branches of journalism. But journalism is a dairy which supplies you with the cream of things in general, and this, as I have said, is daintily whipped by Olivia, whose skill is well known to the readers of various ladies' papers. Unhappily, it is the only cream that appears at tea-time. That is the burden of my woe, though not the worst of it. To speak plain truth, the tea at Olivia's club is the worst that ever flowed from the spout of earthenware. Mounting the staircase, as I have told her, I feel like Socrates going to his hemlock. "Shall I be funny now, or shall we have tea first?" I remarked on the last occasion, as we exchanged greetings. "If you are impatient to begin, my dear man," said Olivia, "pray

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do." "Don't you know it is a quotation? I must be apt and illusive; that is my business. Nothing like keeping your hand in. The quotation is from the Pantaloon in Barrie's play. Shall I be funny now, or——" "Pantaloon!" echoed Olivia. "Why I thought you were Socrates." "They are much of a muchness in my case," I explained. "The most jovial Pantaloon would find it difficult to be funny after tea in this club; and Socrates, after his hemlock, you remember, was not gay."

That was how the breeze came on to blow rather stiffly. "Let us be serious," I said. "It is amazing to me that you can sit down to tea without cream——" "Cream," interrupted Olivia, "is a luxury that should be banished from the simple life. Besides, it spoils the flavour of my tea." "Anything that spoilt the flavour of that," I suggested, "would be a public benefit, if I may speak with the manly frankness of a guest. But it is not only you whose life is at stake. At a moderate computation there must be two hundred women at this moment drinking this sinister fluid. They swarm here every afternoon. Why, if men thronged a club as women throng yours, we should have a civil war. A man joins a club on the understanding

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that the other members will be there intermittently. To be there always we would vote an indecent abuse of the rules." I may remark here that, when animated, I have a Celtic habit of waving the right hand. "Do you know," broke in Olivia at this point, "when I watch your taper fingers describing graceful curves, I always think of a butterfly, and wish I had a net to catch it!" At this there was a distinct movement among the two hundred tea-drinkers—an unmistakable ripple of amusement. "Oh yes!" Olivia went on. "They're all listening. How can they help it when you make yourself a public orator? Besides, they like to hear a man descanting on the selfishness of men's clubs. With you a club seems to be a place where you expect to find half-a-dozen people to glare at. Come, now! Women are the only good fellows after all! Here we flock together to be sociable, and when you speak we follow with fascinated interest the motions of your beautiful hand. Shall I give you another cup of tea?"

"Another cup!" I repeated. "Do you know that in my club this tea would be flung in the teeth of the committee? Do you know you could guy a man with one of these crumpets?" "I haven't succeeded

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to-day," remarked Olivia demurely. "There's something in the management of a woman's club," I proceeded, "which makes for martyrdom. You have not asked me to lunch, by the way!" "Oh!" she cried, "if you're as eloquent as this at tea, what would you be at lunch? And at dinner! But I'll tell you what you can do for us. You shall talk these noble sentiments into a gramophone, and I'll keep it going all the evening!" "This irrelevant persiflage, madam, does not deceive me," I said. "Do you poison yourselves for love?" "Inquisitor!" murmured Olivia, with her eyes cast down. "Or is it only a pose? Must you be saints in your injuries, even when you injure yourselves with your own meals? Now, in a man's club we do not make a virtue of courting dyspepsia. An offended member writes some plain words to the committee, or backs his bill with suitable epithets. Here a waitress hands you a wretched little slip of paper with no room to write anything, even if you had the courage. At my club we have just appointed a vigilance committee to overhaul the kitchen, and if necessary, to send up the head of the cook on a lordly dish. Oh yes! if a man's club is to be carried on we must show the pitiless

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spirit of the feudal barons, who used to nail the ears of a careless varlet to the door. But ours is a humanitarian age, and, of course, we should compensate his widow and orphans. You ought to try our resolute policy here. The minion who made the horrible brew in this teapot ought to be summoned to your presence and admonished with hatpins. The scars would remind her of her duty."

Here I paused and nibbled fiercely at a piece of cake. "You must not suppose," I went on, "that I cherish any personal grievance because the tea you gave me is unspeakably bad. As a philosopher, I have a natural desire for social improvement. Now, why should women's clubs be so completely differentiated from men's clubs? In our friend H. G. Wells's Utopia women's dress, he says, is not so extravagantly differentiated from men's dress as we see it in this imperfect age. For instance, that very smart hat you are wearing to-day would never do in Utopia. Women don't wear hats there except to keep the sun off." There was another mirthful undulation of the two hundred. "Yes, and any woman who persists in wearing flounces and fallals, laces, and feathers keeps them for the entertainment of her domestic circle, and

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seldom ventures to exhibit them to the public eye." "What a lot of callers she must have!" said Olivia. "Don't you see the men crowding to her club at tea-time?" "Ah!" I retorted triumphantly, "but in Utopia the woman's club won't be differentiated from the man's club by its infernal tea."

"In Utopia," rejoined Olivia, "the woman's club will be managed by you and Mr. Wells, no doubt. That is what you are driving at, dear philosopher. I have listened to your tirade with the patience of an angel; but what it comes to is simply this—that you cannot grasp the idea of a club where all the thought is not about eating and drinking. In a man's club you talk of nothing else, and you call the eternal subject politics, and the interests of the nation! I assure you that here we get through an entire day without saying a word about our victuals. That is our blessed differentiation from you!"

There was something like a suppressed cheer from those tea-drinkers. They rejoiced in the discomfiture of man. Ha! they didn't know I was going to write this article. At Olivia's club, let me tell you, there's a billiard-room; and when two ladies play a game of a hundred up it lasts about a fortnight! You see I am

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dipping my pen in what Marie Corelli calls the "secret fount of gall"; only it isn't secret, but quite shameless. For Olivia's defence of the billiards—bless you, she would defend anything feminine!—you had better consult those ladies' papers wherein she sparkles every week.

XVI—*In the Fog*

THERE is, I am told, a sprightly nobleman now in a crack regiment who once volunteered for the public service in a singular capacity. He went up for examination by the authorities who select the London cabmen. Before you can take out a license to drive a cab you have to satisfy those discerning persons that you know your way about town, and are not hopelessly unfamiliar with the management of horses. This nobleman displayed a surprising knowledge of London. The byways of Mile End were as clear to him as the pleasant vales of Kensington, and he drove one of the examiners in his hansom down the steps below the Duke of York's Column and up again, to the great delight of the bystanders. The examiner was a little put out (he is said to have uttered unseemly cries during the journey), and when he alighted he gasped, "Do you expect to get your license after this behaviour?" "Well, I'm not very keen about it," said the sprightly nobleman, "but I wanted to show you that I can manage a horse. Suppose you were lost in a fog,

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and your cab went sliding down these steps, wouldn't you like your cabby to know how to land you safely?" The examiner was not conciliated when the nobleman explained that he had no desire to drive a cab for a livelihood, but wanted to be ready in emergency to pop a tipsy or bewildered cabman inside the hansom and take the reins himself.

I was reminded of this example of public spirit by an incident in the fog which has enveloped us for a whole week. A cabman, trying to turn a corner where there was none, made his horse dance mournfully on the sidewalk, and a nervous lady in the cab remonstrated with her companion. "George," she said, "I am sure this man has never driven a horse before." "Likely enough," said George. "On a foggy night, I believe, they always put on a new hand. It gives him practice." "Don't be stupid!" said the lady severely. "Why can't you drive?" "Neglected education, my dear. And even if I could, how would you like to have the cabman here beside you? When I turned him off his perch, we couldn't leave him in the street, you know." "I would rather have him beside me than you. He, at any rate, would be sympathetic and respectful!" "No, he wouldn't.

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He would say that I had never driven a horse before, and he would probably swear." "At you. I mean he would be sympathetic and respectful to me." "Do you mean to say it would make no difference to you if a cabman swore at your husband?" "It might, if you drove badly. Then I should suspect that you deserved it." "Thank you. Perhaps you wish I were the cabman instead of him!" "Oh, if I thought you would know the business, I should be enchanted!"

Now, if George had qualified himself to drive a cab, and had braced his nerve with that exercise on the Duke of York's staircase, all this bitterness might have been avoided. His wife (a woman of spirit, as you perceive) would have been proud of him; and the story would have made George the hero of dinner-parties for a whole season. I tried to be a hero once on the strength of having saved a cabman's life. He was driving me in a fog, when the horse's belly-band and one of the reins broke simultaneously. I leaped out and stood aghast on the pavement, while the horse went round in a circle until the cabman shouted, "Catch 'old of 'er 'ead!" It was a horrid moment; the animal loomed grimly through the fog; with rigid arm outstretched

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I made a lucky clutch. The cabman got down, and in a voice of emotion said, "You've saved my life. Another moment and she'd 'ave been off into the traffic." I believe he spoke sincerely, but I wish I had given him my address and requested him to send me a written certificate. That story has never been a success. Whenever I reach the first climax in this style: "Half-way between two lamp-posts, just where the fog was blackest, I heard the belly-band and one of the reins snap like pistol-shots, and in a flash I saw myself in an ambulance and a good-looking nurse at the foot of my hospital-bed; but in the next flash I was out of that cab, and safe and sound on my feet"—I say that when I reach that point there is an expression of chilly incredulity on the faces of the company. A friend took me aside on one occasion, and said, in a kindly way, "You had better tone that down, old chap. The belly-band may snap, or the rein, but not both. And leave out the pistol-shots and the hospital-nurse."

This does not deter me from relating another adventure. One morning this week, about one o'clock, I was passing the National Gallery, when I noticed two dim figures in the dense fog, a tall man and a boy. The tall man said,

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"Pardon me, but if you are going in the direction of Shaftesbury Avenue you may be of service to my young friend here, who tells me that he is in search of that thoroughfare. I am but a poor guide, for I have been in the East for many years, and to-night I have been dining with an old friend at a fashionable hotel, the Hummums, and upon my word, in this fog, I am just as much astray as this young gentleman." I looked at him closely in a faint lamplight, and saw a kindly brown face that seemed oddly familiar. His clothes had an ancient cut, and he carried a light malacca cane. "This is the National Gallery," I remarked, "and we are in Trafalgar Square." "The National Gallery!" he exclaimed. "I hope my young friend, whose acquaintance I made but a minute ago, will give some of his leisure hours to that great collection of masters. Nothing trains the mind, sir, like pictures. They soften much the manners, as the old Latin author says. But Trafalgar Square, I fear, does not exercise that refining influence on the people. I have read of demonstrations, sir, of rude defiance of authority." "That seldom happens now," I said. "During your absence abroad, London has been visited by such heavy and

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prolonged fogs that when the people wanted to demonstrate in Trafalgar Square they could not find it. So when the fog lifted, and the processions were tired out, they found themselves at some spot with placid associations, like Pinner."

He seemed pleased with this political development, and I continued: "Besides, there is very little now to demonstrate about. Since these fogs settled down upon us we have pretty nearly solved the social problem. Poor people soon acquired the habit of wandering from their homes, and losing themselves in the almost perpetual night. The papers announced one day that a number of persons who had gathered on the doorstep of a member of the aristocracy, rang the bell and requested shelter. The footman was disposed to pack them off with rough words; but the master came out and invited the whole party to supper. His friends said afterwards that a succession of dull dinner-parties had unhinged his mind, and he said that his new guests were vastly more original and amusing than the old. Whether his example was good or bad, it worked something like a revolution. The poor made a practice of assembling at the doors of the nobility, whose curiosity was

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stimulated by the remarkable collection of Whitechapel anecdotes with which the first nobleman's visitors had enriched him. It became the fashion to ask the poor to dinner, and they gradually took free quarters in the West End, until the distinction between poverty and wealth was almost nominal. I undertake to say that you might ring at any Belgravian mansion to-night, and be shown into the best spare bedroom, while the cook would cheerfully rise from his couch to prepare a hot repast."

"I rejoice to hear it," said the stranger. "For myself I care nothing. But I think that such a lodging as you mention would be of benefit to our young friend, who would thus have an opportunity of mixing with people of breeding. Why go to Shaftesbury Avenue, my boy, if——" The boy broke into a shriek of laughter. "Why, he's a-kiddin' of you, gov'nor," said this amiable urchin. "He's one of them newspaper chaps as makes folks like you believe anything. I ain't been a printer's devil without knowing the likes o' him!" "You have amused yourself, sir, at my expense," said the stranger quietly. "So this is now the mission of the Press. How different from

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the days of my friends Mr. Warrington and Mr. Pendennis! *Quantum mutatus ab illo!*" He swung his cane and vanished in the fog, and I believe he was the ghost of Thomas Newcome.

XVII—*The Perils of Crowding*

LET us consider the Crowd—a good Bank Holiday subject. Some years ago an ingenious Frenchman wrote a treatise on the psychology of the Crowd. His theory was that, when people congregate, they will behave collectively in a manner in which they would not behave individually. Not an unreasonable theory, when you reflect that people gathered in the London streets will cheer the King of Spain, whereas one solitary person in a street would probably be too bashful to lift his voice. But it is often the fate of philosophical theories to grow out of all proportion to common sense. This is what has happened to the Crowd: it has become a monster. Doctrinaires have made it so terrifying that I am afraid to sit down to dinner when the company numbers, let us say, a baker's dozen.

Sir Martin Conway, who has an amazing article in the *Nineteenth Century* entitled "Is Parliament a Mere Crowd?" tells us gravely that to be quite rational a crowd should not consist of more than nine persons. Above that number it becomes dangerous. I have

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met people who refused to dine with thirteen at table. The other evening a friend of mine who came late to dinner, and was told by way of jest that there were thirteen of us, turned pale, started from his chair, and said he would go home. His wife was ill, and he would not risk the omen. With some difficulty we proved to him by infallible arithmetic that we were only ten. But we ought to have known that the number ten was as damning as thirteen. Let us put our shocking state in the words of Sir Martin Conway, "A Crowd is a creature devoid of religion, devoid of human morals, ungoverned by reason, the victim of every kind of sentiment and sentimentality, puffed up with pride, and belongs in the scale of living creatures to the realm, not of men, but of beasts."

That's the sort of dinner-party we were! Ten innocent citizens, who had gathered for a modest feast, and (as we thought) a flow of soul, was transformed by worse than Circean magic into beasts that lack discourse of reason! When I was a lad there was a popular ditty about the "Ten Little Nigger Boys," whose numbers were gradually and sadly diminished.

"Ten little nigger boys going out to dine
One had a——"

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Dear me! I forget what calamity befell him, but it reduced the party to nine. This was long before that ingenious Frenchman wrote his treatise; and so we used to sing with mistaken sorrow how persistent misfortune reduced the number to eight, and so on, until "there were none." Blessed none! Those little negro boys didn't know, and we didn't know, that as they faded away they ceased to be the irreligious, inhuman, sentimental, conceited, and beastly crowd, and rose in the spiritual scale to angelic bliss.

Paterfamilias, when he counts his brood at breakfast after reading this column, may remark to his wife in an agitated tone, "My dear, there are eleven of us!" "Yes, John, and why not?" she will say placidly, with a fond glance at her youngest and chubbiest. "Certainly, my dear," John will respond; "but, according to the *Daily Dispatch*, Sir Martin Conway would call us a crowd, inhuman, irreligious——" "*What!!!*" Mrs. John will cry, snatching the paper from his trembling hand. Pray be calm, gentle reader. Sir Martin is good enough to say that his theory does not apply to the family. Your eleven darlings are never of one mind and temper. Little Jane cultivates her individuality

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by pinching little Gerald. When you hear screams from the nursery you can say with a sigh of relief: "My children are not victims of every kind of sentiment!"

The philosopher says nothing about schools, and I wonder whether the Crowd in the playground offers any guarantee of religion and humanity. But when the boys go out into the world, then it is all up with them. Think of the Crowd at cricket—two elevens and a concourse of spectators! Think of the various public bodies which must debase the man who joins them; literary and scientific societies, municipal councils, the House of Commons! When he deals with the Parliamentary Crowd, Sir Martin hurls the thunderbolts of a Hebrew prophet. Are you aware that in providing for great public ceremonials—coronations to wit—Parliament takes care to grab the best seats? This is because it is a Crowd, puffed up with pride. "There is no earthly reason why Parliament should be any better housed than a board school." And look at that stately pile at Westminster, with its Clock Tower and Big Ben! What would the Board of Education say if the local authorities were to give every elementary school a taller tower and a Bigger Ben? Have you ever reflected

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that it is the "crowd-dignity" of M.P.'s which "leads them to declare that, as representing the country, they must be gloriously entertained," this "crowd-dignity" being the kind of sentimentality that naturally springs from a lack of human morals? If you have ever dined at the House of Commons, you will know what to think of committees, especially the Kitchen Committee, and their glorious entertainments. Why, in old memoirs you will read how eminent Parliamentarians consumed enormous quantities of port while waiting for divisions; how in the House itself, Joseph Hume would eat eighteen oranges in the course of a single speech, while his fellow-members sprawled on the benches cracking filberts. And all this because they were a Crowd!

The Parliamentary Crowd, being "an amorphous creature without a brain," it has to get its thinking done by a council called a Cabinet. But you must go further back a moment; the constituencies are Crowds, amorphous creatures with no brains, and they elect "the amorphous Parliament," so you behold in the present Cabinet the political thinking apparatus of the whole nation. But the Cabinet, numbering nineteen or so instead of

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nine, is itself a Crowd, as amorphous as the rest; so the inner camarilla—say Mr. Balfour, Mr. Akers-Douglas, and Lord Halsbury—supply us all with thought. When one of them makes a speech you know that you are getting water straight from the main. The quaintest thing is that the House-Crowd sometimes upsets the Cabinet-Crowd, or the Nation-Crowd makes a clean sweep of both. If the world had only known the nature of Crowds ages ago, say about the time of Simon de Montfort, would Parliaments have come into existence? Apparently Sir Martin Conway thinks not; but there is a still greater problem. If, before society began, when man was still boasting the life of the blessed Individualist, and avoiding such entanglements as committees, conversaziones, and tea-meetings—if he could have then foreseen to what debasement a gregarious instinct might lead, would he not have remained a free and independent cave-dweller, and so have preserved his reason, morals, and religion?

Well, well! This speculative retrospect doesn't help us much. What are we to do now? If you can detach yourself from the Crowd, you may write like Sir Martin Conway, compared with whom Diogenes was a flighty

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optimist and Timon a humanitarian. You may say that the Crowd is "a mean creature of low habits, untrustworthy, incapable of settled opinions, passionate, and of sickly sentimentality." Yes, but even Diogenes lived in a tub, and you probably live in a club. Sir Martin Conway, a famous mountaineer, dwells, I presume, on a peak in the Andes, far from the madding crowd and its contagion. But the Club-Crowd; I feel it pressing on me now, even as I write—"devoid of all the higher intelligences that are present in the individual brain." O my individual brain—I know it is going!

XVIII—*Logic for Women*¹

MISS CONSTANCE JONES is Principal of Girton College, and her *Primer* exposes the fallacy that women are incapable of logic. At Girton, it is clear, Major Premiss is not mistaken for a gentleman in the King's uniform; and although Syllogisms have their Moods, these are not of the feminine variety. All the Moods have technical names, and one of them is Barbara; but even Barbara shows signs of severe mental training. The "Syllogism in Barbara" does not lead a Girton girl to reason thus: John is a monster; all men are like John; all men are monsters.

We have known pessimism generated in a feminine mind by a process not unlike this. But Barbara does not need a little judicious petting on the part of John to recover her spirits, and her faith in mankind. She does not concern herself with John at all. In the *Primer* of Miss Constance Jones she operates in this manner: All opposed to fiscal reform are too conservative; all Radicals are opposed to

¹ "Primer of Logic," by E. Constance Jones. London, Murray, 1s. 6d.

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fiscal reform ; all Radicals are too conservative. It is not an expression of political opinion, but an illustration of Premises that justify the Conclusion. No ; Barbara is not an insidious Tariff Reformer ; she is simply a Figure ; and a Figure in logic has nothing to do with small waists.

Many admirable women have scoffed at logic. They have treated it as a masculine attribute, and have shown that woman has no use for it. If she can conceive by swift intuition what man can master only by a laborious process of reasoning, of what service to her would be a logical mind ? But is man entitled to claim logic as his natural inheritance ? How many of us can affirm that our minds work systematically according to the technical apparatus of the Girton Primer ? Are we all ready to detect the Fallacy of Amphibology, wherein we have "an ambiguity of construction which allows of a plurality of interpretations" ? Why, this very Fallacy of Amphibology (though nobody knows it by that highly respectable name) is the life and soul of our Parliamentary system. Without it the House of Commons would be reduced to silence. There is only one man there who shows it up, and that is the Speaker. But imagine a

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Minister answering a question without the help of Amphibology!

A man may acquire a certain breadth of mind from his contact with the world, but to call him a logical being is gross exaggeration. All his personal feelings are at war with the Girton Primer. He is not a disembodied Figure like Barbara, but a creature of passions and prejudices, which cannot be eliminated from his nature. He attaches himself to a party, and his party shouts its war-cries without the slightest regard for Syllogisms. He upholds the religious dogmas in which he was born, and what has logic to do with them? Looking back on the history of mankind, will anybody say that logic has played more than an infinitesimal part in it? Sentiment—often a vastly misdirected sentiment—has played a prodigious part; and we, in whom a particular sentiment has weakened with the lapse of ages, may smile at the follies of our ancestors, in whom it was dominant; but our own contribution to the sum of wisdom will be equally diverting to those who come after us.

For this reason the historical student at Girton, convinced by her reading that human nature is incurably illogical, may be tempted to smile at the Primer of Miss Constance Jones.

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What is the use of Syllogisms which carefully avoid actualities? There was a period in the history of our currency when a ten-shilling piece was called an angel. So a specious Syllogism may be constructed thus: All women are angels; all angels are worth ten shillings apiece; all women are worth ten shillings. This is not the mood of Barbara, needless to say. She would scorn to attribute angelic qualities to all women, although some eminent men have done it without a blush.

That all women are angels is a poetical figment; to reduce them to the value of ten shillings is sordid pessimism. Both the pessimism and the figment are interesting; and the logic which entertains neither is not. Nothing in life has any real hold upon us except its fallacies. You find a proof of this in the one human touch of the Girton Primer. "Jevons says that Jeremy Bentham was so much afraid of being misled by the Fallacy of Accent that he used to employ a person to read to him who had a particularly monotonous way of reading." Poor old Jeremy! He wanted to guard his precious intellect against the cajolery of the human voice.

Rob the orator of his persuasive music; rob woman of her tearful accents; strip humanity

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of every fascinating irrelevance; banish the fallacious promptings we draw from Nature with every breath; and then you may have a race of beings fitted to conduct their affairs in accordance with the Girton Primer. Does no misgiving cross the mind of Miss Constance Jones when she contemplates the figure of Jeremy Bentham listening to a voice without a soul? Could there be a greater fallacy than his assumption that, in his own mind, he was distilling what he heard into pure reason, unaffected by personal bias? Let the Girton girl, who despairs of reasoning as dispassionately as Barbara in her Mood, take heart. The Primer of Miss Constance Jones can be quite safely neglected for the more humane ministrations of that accomplished scholar.

XIX—*Motor Cars and Nervous Systems*

I HAVE no prejudice against motor cars, but I have a nervous system. It received a shock some years ago, when a friend of mine, who keeps a perfect stud of motor cars, drove me from London to Broadstairs one Bank Holiday. It seemed to me that it was London, London all the way; streets thronged with children, who might at any moment be reduced to pulp, and with accusing witnesses of our behaviour in a car which had the crushing dignity of a Pickford van. When we came to any open country, we scoured it—"scoured the plain" is the classic phrase, I think—although, to judge from the dusty expression we left behind us, the plain was none the cleaner for the operation. There was at times a sensation of not touching earth at all, but of ploughing air; a thrilling sensation which approached delirium. It was useful in a way, for it has enabled me to understand ever since why the motorist, however cautious, when his car is on a bit of unfrequented road, feels the imperious need of letting her go. America is the land of popular phrases, which

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spring heaven knows whence, and mean heaven knows what. I remember a season when the popular phrase in every American city was, "Let her go, Gallagher!" Who Gallagher was, who or what she was, and why he ought to let her go, I asked in vain. I asked American statesmen, philosophers, and journalists, and they didn't know. Nobody knows to this day. But on the way to Broadstairs I gave a crazy shout—"Let her go, Gallagher!" feeling that Gallagher must be the other name of Phœbus Apollo, who used to drive the horses of the sun, but is now the chauffeur of that celestial Panhard.

Since then my nervous system has been shy of Gallagher. Electric broughams that glide about the town with a gentle hum (the cabmen call them "'ummin' birds," meaning to be derisive; but it is really a poetical compliment) are entirely to my taste. I'd own one if I could afford it. When I see electric broughams waiting at the portals of the mighty—the portals which have blossomed out in awnings and other symptoms of the evening party—I think how delightful it must be to the ladies who will be whisked home in the early morning with a sound as of bees beginning the day's employment—how delightful to know that

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they are not keeping horses standing in the chill air! If I owned an electric brougham, and had been invited to that evening party, I should not be able to resist the humanitarian impulse to say to some lady whose horses were waiting: "What a blessing it will be for the poor horse when he is no longer kept out of his nice warm stable; when science has done away with him and his stable, and set up a garage instead!" So you see that any observations of my nervous system that may seem unfriendly to motor cars in general are not prompted by envy.

Envy, I am grieved to note, is freely attributed by some motorists to critics who say that the natural human craving for speed should be restrained by law. I can produce two reputable witnesses to swear that my nervous system has declined their frequent invitations to another spin with Gallagher. They are devoted to motor cars with a tender solicitude which other men bestow on wives and families. They cannot understand how any man can take, as I do, the view that highways—even the unfrequented bits—are not meant for the untrammelled energies of locomotives and engine-drivers. But they do not suspect me of coveting their blessed engines.

There is something pathetic in the motorist's

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belief that if he has a car capable of a high speed he ought to enjoy it. He clings to that unfrequented bit of road—where he can “let her go”—as if it were created for him. What use is it to anybody else? The pedestrian cannot appreciate it, with his three or four miles an hour. The cyclist is not worthy of it, for he may be fagged and listless. A four-in-hand cannot do it justice, for the coachman must be careful of his horses. And when it comes to pace, what are even wild horses compared with wilder motors? Yes, that unfrequented stretch of high-road belongs to the motorist, whose use of it should be left to his unfettered discretion; and yet there is a terrific fuss about the legal limit of speed whenever he avails himself of his sovereign prerogative. Nervous systems are appalled by the very sight of him. Police lie in ambush to catch his number. Cyclists with red flags warn him of the lurking foe, much as certain small fish are said to warn certain big fish, prowling in the deep. So the motorist who wants to scour the plain at the speed of an express train, whenever he thinks proper, regards himself as a poor hunted creature, and the law as an instrument of oppression, which is a disgrace to a free country.

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I note that Mr. Scott Montagu, who is a man of sense, is projecting a corporation of motorists, to be called "The Considerate Driving League." He tells his brother-motorists this week that "public indignation is again rising strongly against, not the use, but the abuse, of roads by motor cars"; that members of Parliament are beset by furious constituents; and that if the Motor Car Act should be renewed next year the penalties may be doubled and the speed halved. That seems very likely indeed. As it is, many local authorities are demanding that in their areas the speed should be reduced to ten miles an hour. Evidently they are not in the mood to make over those unfrequented bits of highway for the motorists to sport with. Mr. Scott Montagu has drawn up some "Maxims" for his league. Members are required to "drive slowly through towns and villages, when approaching cross roads or turning corners, when passing schools, cottages, and churches, on dusty or muddy roads when passing cyclists and pedestrians, when entering a main road from a side road. These and other directions in the same spirit are admirable indeed. But are not some of them very like counsels of perfection? When you are tasting the first fine, careless rapture of a spin

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with Gallagher, are you in the humour to check him at every corner and cross road? Will a cottage or two cool your ardour, or even a church? Are you going to drive slowly past every pedestrian because the road happens to be dusty? Where is it anything but dusty, if you are scouring it? "Always assume," says Mr. Scott Montagu, "that it is your business, not the other man's, to avoid danger." Well, if the members of the Considerate Driving League can act up to such instructions, they will present one of the most remarkable spectacles of discipline that human nature has seen.

But these "Maxims" do testify to the up-rising of the nervous systems. They show a recognition of the fact that the public will not tolerate the caprices of excessive speed. When the law fixes a limit, and the motorist claims the right to disregard that limit under conditions chosen by himself, he is in danger of provoking the Legislature to fix another limit of a far more peremptory kind. It may be necessary to prohibit the sale and use of motor cars above a certain capacity. When no car can travel faster than twenty miles an hour, the police need not lurk in ditches, and the little fish will not render that charming service to

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the big fish. When I put this contingency to my motorists, who cherish their cars with a love passing the love of woman, they turn pale with emotion. They see their hearts' delight sacrificed by a ruthless despotism. They assure me earnestly that if so monstrous a law should be enacted they will never drive a motor car again. They predict the ruin of a great and growing industry and the downfall of England!

Well, my nervous system tells me that twenty miles or even less would serve all reasonable purposes of business and sport, even on the bits of road which could be warranted free from cottagers or other obstacles to the impetuous Gallagher. People who want more had better make a motoring tour in Central Asia. If they prefer to stay in this populous isle, let them gratify their love of speed by taking express trains, which are controlled by "Maxims" less stringent than Mr. Scott Montagu's and more feasible.

XX—*Two Millions*

IF you came suddenly into possession of two millions sterling, what would be your state of mind? We have all imagined the irruption of a million into our humdrum, hand-to-mouth existence; how we should be as simple as ever in our tastes; affable to early friends; sympathetic to organised charity, without turning a deaf ear to private woe; generous patrons of arts and letters, without a craving to build free libraries. With the possession of a bare million you could not emulate the educational zeal of Mr. Carnegie. But upon the elderly dame who sweeps a certain crossing, and was found one day engrossed in a romance called "A Young Lady of Quality," I should like, were I a millionaire, to settle for life a subscription to Mudie's. Our present inquiry, however, relates to the contingency of two millions. Do you suppose that such affluence would simply mean a proportionate enlargement of ease, a mere doubling of the opportunities set forth above, the endowment, for example, of two crossing-sweepers with a life interest in the sacred fount

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of current fiction? Or are you prepared for the obligation which the ever-progressive conscience of the age has inspired an American statesman to fix upon the possession of two millions, making it a landmark in the history of morals?

The American statesman has brought in a Bill which defines the limit of honesty in opulence. He says that to own more than two millions sterling is not decent. You may have something like seventy thousand a year and be a welcome figure in society; but if you have as much again you ought to be shunned. If I understand the American statesman, he would penalise this excess on the principle of our new law for the correction of habitual toppers. Any citizen convicted of owning more than ten million dollars should be put on the Black List, and excluded for three years from Wall Street and other marts of industry. Does not this throw a cloud, my friend, over our little fantasy of sudden wealth? If you became possessed of those millions, you would be in constant dread lest they should increase and multiply. Instead of giving away money as cheerfully and methodically as Mr. Carnegie, you would plunge into a career of indiscriminate phil-

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anthropy. The newspapers would hint that your reckless benefactions were pauperising the poorer classes. You would not have a moment free from hypochondria. At a certain restaurant I often see a gloomy stranger dining by himself. There was a great commotion on the telephone one evening; somebody had urgent need of him. "Not here," was the response; "he always goes to bed at half-past ten." "Strange habit," I remarked to the waiter. "Yes," he said. "That is a very wealthy man." Behold your fate when your investments swell beyond the pale of decency. To bed at ten-thirty to hide your shame!

Depend upon it, the American statesman has observed a growing sensitiveness among the opulent, a desire for drastic legislation. Mr. Henry James, studying American society with a detached mind in Europe, has perceived the sensitiveness. In his novel, "The Wings of a Dove," there is an American girl, Milly Theale, who has inherited vast riches. Failing to induce an Englishman to share this burden, she dies of it. To the discerning eye this is poor Milly's tragedy: the dove is crushed by her immoral millions. She leaves some of them to the Englishman in her will; but

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he, too, is so sensitive that he will have none of them. Oddly enough, Mr. W. D. Howells, usually alive to moral lessons, misses this one altogether in his dissertation in the *North American Review* on Mr. Henry James's art. Milly, says Mr. Howells, is a "lovely impalpability," and "New Yorkish in the very essences that are least associable with the superficial notion of New York." She is the "distilled and wandering fragrance" of that city. Moreover, she has "a Bostonian quality, with the element of conscious worth eliminated and purified as essentially of pedantry as of commerciality." Such analysis ought to reveal the truth to Mr. Howells; but the subtlest pulsation of the inpalpable is hidden from him, and he ascribes Milly's refinement to "conditions of illimitable ease, of having had everything that one could wish to have"; in short, of all that excess above ten million dollars which preys upon the poor girl's mind, and hastens her doom.

American society has other fragrances, not all distilled from repugnance to the overgrowth of dross. Mark Twain tells us that the Christian Science Trust is amassing dollars at such a rate that within thirty years it ought to be the wealthiest corporation in the world.

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Mrs. Baker Eddy, founder of the Trust, is not a "lovely impalpability," but a woman of business. "The Trust gives nothing away; everything it has is for sale. And the terms are cash; and not only cash, but cash in advance. Its god is Mrs. Eddy first, then the Dollar." The headquarters of the Trust are at Boston, and the element of conscious worth is not eliminated. It has a college, where the student is taught Christian Science for the modest charge of sixty pounds the course of seven lessons. Mark Twain anticipates that by 1930 the Trust will rule the Republic by the force of votes and a boundless exchequer. Mrs. Eddy is already held by her adherents to be divinely inspired. After her death she will be an object of public worship; and pilgrimages to her tomb will be enormously lucrative to her executors. The Trust does not waste money on charities. Any disciple who may be perplexed by this branch of Mrs. Eddy's economy is reassured in these terms: "We must have faith in Our Mother, and rest content in the conviction that, whatever She does with the money, it is in accordance with orders from Heaven." This process, Mark Twain calculates, should make the resources of the Trust in thirty

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years about a billion dollars; and if a billion means, as some arithmeticians say, a thousand millions, the Trust will have a capital of two hundred millions sterling, without any of the misgivings that would haunt you and me if a paltry couple of millions should descend upon each of us.

This is not one of Mark Twain's jokes. Mrs. Eddy, he says, has a million adherents now, all possessed by the belief that Christian Science relieves the elect not merely from bodily ills, but also from "frets, fears, vexations, bitterness, and all sorts of imagination-propagated maladies and pains." The world is filled with sunshine, and the heart with gladness. If you suffer from melancholy, you send for the Christian Science student who has taken his lessons at sixty pounds the course of seven; he utters an incantation, and straightway you imagine that all is well. It does not appear that the incantation will bring material comfort, if you are in poverty; but it will make you regard poverty as a delusion, like toothache or sciatica. "If Christian Science," says Mark Twain, "with this stupendous equipment—and final salvation added—cannot win half the Christian globe, I must be badly mistaken in the make-up of

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the human race." Half the Christian globe, lighter-hearted than Mark Tapley, persuaded that want is a baffled nightmare, bereavement a joy, that life is not a walking shadow but a song—this is itself a forecast which does Mark Twain's imagination considerable credit. Perhaps the Trust already regards him with smiling assurance as more than half converted.

But why did Mr. Henry James sacrifice Milly, the lovely and impalpable, when she might have given her superfluous dollars to the Trust, and spread her dovelike wings in the Bostonian atmosphere of conscious worth? And why need you and I sit mournfully in the shadow of the American statesman's Bill? If the Trust is going to administer the Republic in the year 1930, the millionaires may as well be cured of hypochondria at once. Mark Twain hints not obscurely that Mrs. Eddy's principles will triumph in Great Britain. Then why not let fortune have her own way? You can reconcile yourself to those two millions sterling, and a possible increment, without subscribing a farthing to the Trust. And instead of going to bed at half-past ten, you can hear the chimes at midnight in a modestly cheerful company.

XXI—*The White Hat*

I REMEMBER wearing a tall White Hat a great many years ago, because in that golden age every man wore a White Hat in summer time. It was the period when trousers of a black and white check pattern—rather a large check, too—were considered “high-toned,” as the Americans say, in league with the frock coat. About that time I possessed, but was afraid to wear, a pair of check trousers, made out of a shawl (you know the striking patterns of old-fashioned shawls) which had belonged to a thrifty aunt. She, good soul, thought she was doing me a service in days when there was little money to spend on trifles, and I had not the heart to say that trousers of such an origin would scarcely commend themselves to the public eye, except in some remote parts of Scotland. As a matter of fact, the public eye nearly started out of the public head at the sight of them. Rude little street boys seemed to think those trousers had been made for their special joy. Worse still, charming damsels whom one naturally desired to impress, arched their eyebrows, and murmured, “Well, I never!” So I was glad to

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dispose of those checks to a friend who was then in a solicitor's office, and he wore them with great intrepidity. To-day he is one of the most eminent of King's Counsel ; he represents a great constituency in the House of Commons ; and he is tolerably certain to end as Lord Chancellor. Sometimes I think that my aunt and I were the architects of his fortunes.

Why did the White Hat decline from its proud eminence and almost disappear from the haunts of men, save, perhaps, Tattersall's and the Turf ? A few old gentlemen continued to wear it here and there ; it imparted a pleasantly rakish air to advancing years ; but young men, for the most part, gave it up. Some of them may have been deterred (as I was in that affair of my aunt's translated shawl) by the rude little street boys, who were not yet subdued by compulsory elementary education. I have seen a timid youth, escorting his sister or his cousin, greatly embarrassed by the shrill cry of "Who stole the donkey ? The man in the White Hat !" How well I remember hearing him on one occasion eagerly assuring his companions that he had not stolen the donkey, and was, indeed, quite incapable of stealing donkeys ! Moreover, he pointed out that if he had committed this felonious act, he would naturally

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do his best to efface all trace of it by wearing a black hat. But the sting of the street boy's gibe would not be drawn by logic. He was equally disconcerting when he inquired, with an air of great eagerness : " Who's your hatter ? " It was evident that if you had tried to counter this sally by giving him the desired information, he would have responded gravely, " Thank you, I shall lose no time in ordering a tile like yours ! "

I suppose that the board schools quelled the spirit of inquiry or directed it into other channels. When the street boy went to school and learned sums and dates, his appetite for knowledge was satiated, and he had no longer that burning wish to make your hatter's acquaintance. When I hear people complain about the ill-effects of the board school education on the manners of the young, I contrast the average town urchin of to-day with an earlier generation, and wonder how this tame, spiritless atom can be called rude ! You seldom hear his voice ; he seems almost to have lost the art of whistling. When I think of the street boys I used to know, who shouted with immense relish the refrain of a popular ballad—

" So let the world jog along as it will,
I'll be free and easy still,"

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I see that the boys of the present time, with all the vivacity crushed out of them by the educational machine, do not even know what ease and freedom mean.

Yes; but this may be the very reason why the White Hat is beginning to bloom again. It cometh up as a flower, timidly, as if not quite sure that the nipping blast of juvenile ridicule is over. It is said that the highest personage in the realm is striving to encourage the nervous blossom. There is a story of a distinguished man who went to his hatter's to buy a new silk hat for the garden party at Windsor. "Let me recommend the White Hat," said the smiling tradesman. The distinguished man, who has a taste for literature, drily observed: "Ah! I remember now that in 'Alice in Wonderland' the Mad Hatter wears a White Hat." "Sir," said the tradesman with dignity, "let me tell you that at the garden party a White Hat will be worn by the highest personage in the realm." "Good heavens!" exclaimed the distinguished man uneasily, "if what you say be true my remark savours of——" "High treason," said the hatter grimly. "But I will not inform against you. And now what do you say to a White Hat?" The troubled customer bought it

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hastily and repaired to Windsor. He strolled through the Castle grounds, and saw many of his friends, but there was not a White Hat amongst them. "Hullo!" said they, "where did you get that hat?" "Don't be vulgar," said he. "Vulgar," said they, rather nettled, "we have asked you a civil question——" "Oh yes, of course! And your civil question is a line from a stupid comic song, and what's more, it is out of date, like you and your black silk hat!"

A ripple of mirth fluttered through the historic trees. "Out of date!" echoed the gleeful crowd. "Why, man, no White Hat has been seen at Windsor since George the Fourth. And his was a beaver." A spasm of misgiving shot through that distinguished man. "So was the Mad Hatter's!" he said to himself. But there was nothing for it but to keep a bold face. "Just you wait," he said to the crowd, "until you see the highest personage in the realm. If he is not wearing a White Hat, I'll stand new black hats for the lot of you." "Agreed!" they cried joyously. "But if you are wrong, you'll stand me White Hats for the next ten years," he went on, secretly annoyed at his own bravado. They concurred with rapture. News of this extra-

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ordinary wager ran through the garden party, and everybody said that the distinguished man had seen his best days, and was evidently going in the top storey. But suddenly the band struck up the National Anthem, and the highest personage in the realm appeared on the scene; and with him was the next highest personage in the line of succession; and lo! they were both wearing White Hats! "By Jove!" murmured the distinguished man under his breath, "my hatter is not mad after all!" But to the crowd who surrounded him, and overwhelmed him with congratulations, he merely said, "Ah! you see!" And they all agreed that his best days were only just beginning.

Now, I am assured on excellent authority (as we say in the newspapers) that this was the origin of the present revival; but I meet one man after another, who says, "Pooh! If you were not so decidedly unobservant you would have noticed that I have worn a White Hat these two seasons. Why, man, I started the fashion!" I met a popular dramatist, and said to him: "Hallo! *You* in a White Hat!" "My dear fellow," he replied, "it was new for my daughter's wedding last year. And pray observe that it isn't your commonplace

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White, but a delicate shade of grey, and I have had this new grey suit made to match it." "I see you like a big black band." "'Butcher's mourning,' they call it in the trade. I don't know why." When I related this to an eminent dramatic critic his comment was characteristic. "He means his own trade. That mourning is for his last play, which I had the pleasure of cutting up!"

I have a friend who has come out strong in a tall cream-coloured hat, which harmonises with his rather saturnine beauty. It is clear that the White Hat does not suit every man. I am expecting a fulminator in the *Times* from Mr. Bernard Shaw against the attempt to impose this formula upon a masculine community which ought to express itself in a stimulating variety of hats. Mr. Shaw has denounced our evening dress, especially the artificially whitened shirt, which, he says, is "seriously unclean." In his eyes the White Hat may be no better than a soiled dove. I am not without hopes that he will start a propagandist mission and visit the principal towns of England in a Green Hat. If he will I shall be with him, hat and soul. Erin-go-bragh!

XXII—*The After-Dinner Speech*

SIR FRANCIS BERTIE, our Ambassador in Paris, has made a bold innovation. At the banquet of the British Chambers of Commerce, when his health was drunk, he rose and "bowed his acknowledgments." The company were taken aback. A silent Ambassador at a public dinner: who had ever heard of such a paradox? I remember a feast given by a literary club, with the Persian Minister in London as the chief guest. The club was devoted to Omar Khayyam, and one of the members was ready to toast the guest with quotations from Omar and Hafiz in the original. But he had no luck, for the Minister, having eaten his dinner, unfolded his overcoat and like the Arabs silently stole away. That affair is an "Asian mystery" to this hour. Perhaps Sir Francis Bertie had heard of it, and thought it an excellent example. Why should Ambassadors imperil diplomacy by making after-dinner speeches? Mr. Choate makes them in abundance; but, then, American diplomacy is noted for its frankness. It is only in Europe and Asia that diplomatic secrets have to be guarded.

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Perhaps Sir Francis was guarding them when he "bowed his acknowledgments."

There is another hypothesis, which brings me to the serious point of this article. After-dinner speaking is a special and peculiar art. You may hold the House of Commons entranced by the hour; you may keep a public meeting hanging on your lightest word. Yet after dinner you may bore your audience to death, or make a slip which moves them to fatal mirth. This singular phenomenon impressed itself on me early in youth. When but a lad I was present at a municipal banquet given to Charles Dickens in a city not far from Manchester. I did not take my little porringer and eat my dinner there, as Wordsworth would say; but I sat in the gallery and heard the speeches. What do I remember? Simply the dreadful thing that happened to the gentleman who proposed the toast of "The Ladies." He was a very clever, very fluent barrister, who had distinguished himself mightily in the Courts. But when he proposed this toast he made that fatal slip. "Speaking for the ladies," he said, "and for myself as one of them——" There was a titter, and I caught a gleam from Dickens's wonderful eyes. He responded to the toast,

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and began thus : "The learned lady who has just sat down——" Well, the shout that stormed through the hall still rings in my ears. Perhaps that clever barrister is now a judge ; but I wonder whether the lesson he received on that memorable night made him reticent after dinner. Is he careful now to "bow his acknowledgments" ?

As for boring our audiences with the best intentions, how many offenders have I known ! Men of parts, mind you, none of your inaudible worthies, county magnates and the like, who remain long on their legs, extolling "The Army, Navy, and Reserve Forces." No ; I am thinking of poets, statesmen, scholars, novelists, and colonial governors. I remember a poet, one of the most brilliant men of his generation, who responded for "The Drama," and bored us with the argument that the theatre was no place for the public. It should be the private sanctuary of the dramatist, who would give away boxes and stalls to his enlightened friends. We thought this was a joke at first ; but it was a thesis, and threatened to consume the night. Now, Britons never, never will be slaves to the after-dinner bore. We put him down by banging plates with the handles of forks. It is sometimes a brutal thing, but

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then—— I remember another poet, a lovable being from America, who lost himself entirely in a monologue. I believe he had forgotten all about us, and thought he was alone on an Alpine peak, like Manfred. The pathetic look that came into his eyes when he understood that we were executing him as a bore I shall never forget.

I have known a popular novelist, at a dinner in his honour, drive the company to the fork-handles. That incident was not without humour. Another novelist of my acquaintance had the unhappy idea that the art of after-dinner speaking consists in saying anything that comes into your head, and keeping everybody waiting until it does come. One of his pauses was interrupted by somebody with this quotation—

“ It cometh not, we said ;
We are weary, weary, weary,
We would we were in bed.”

You will scarcely believe it, but that novelist accused me of having spoiled his oration. I remember a Spanish scholar, who mistook a dinner-table for an institute, where one listens patiently to lectures ; also a colonial governor, who seemed to think we were a legislative assembly, and that he was opening the session.

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He braved the fork-handles right gallantly, but I have never been certain whether this was the dauntless spirit of the haughty pro-Consul, or whether he had got the speech by rote, and had to go on until he ran down, like a clock.

How are these misadventures to be avoided? What is the art of after-dinner speaking? I should say, in the first place, that it is the art of pleasing. Remember that for about ten or fifteen minutes you have to tickle the fancy of people who have dined. You are a showman—a cut or two, maybe, above the gentleman who entertains the company with a “humorous sketch,” and who is sometimes rather a dangerous rival, by the way; still, you are a showman. You must calculate your effects with the utmost nicety, and make them with such a spontaneous air that although nobody really supposes them to be improvised, you can sometimes create the illusion that they are. You must have the whole bag of tricks carefully sorted before you sit down to dinner, and yet you must be able to fashion a fresh one out of something in the conversation, or a hint from a previous speaker, and fix it neatly in its proper place. The occasion of the dinner and the people who will be there furnish you beforehand with a theme which

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must not resemble anybody else's theme. You must know by sympathetic instinct that it will surprise and charm. Surprise, indeed, is the secret of the composition: to arrest attention with the opening sentences, and then keep curiosity at full stretch until you reach your grand disclosure, throwing in dramatic "asides," and artfully provoking interruptions which you know exactly how to meet: this is the show.

"Phew!" you may say. "What a business! Who is going to take all that trouble?" Very few do take it. The art of after-dinner speaking has no commercial value. Lecturers are paid; preachers are paid; demagogues get their little account; but the consummate artist who makes fifteen minutes sparkle after dinner finds no cheque under his plate. "It's the deuce of a job," he said to me, as we walked away from one of his triumphs. "You see, it is on my mind for days. I prepare it in the street mostly. When you notice motor cars pulled up short, and policemen wildly waving their arms, you may guess that I have thought of a capital phrase in the middle of a crossing. Then I spout it twenty times over in my bedroom. Then, if one's nerves are not quite the ticket, there's the risk of dropping a sentence

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and upsetting the whole blessed caboodle. Oh, it's the deuce of a job, and all the reward is the art of it!" He looked with wistful rapture at the stars. I wonder whether he will retire from the profession one day and be content, like Sir Francis Bertie, to "bow his acknowledgments!"

XXIII—*Bridge*

I POINTED out to him, in one of the journals which expound the mind of women, the passage which had tickled my fancy. Something of the kind I had read before ; that women no longer crave for the society of man ; that they make agreeable coteries without his help ; that they carry on animated conversations, in which he and his concerns play no part ; that he is an overrated adjunct of civilisation ; and that, speaking broadly, he has been found out. “You, as a squire of dames,” I said to my friend, “can tell me whether this is an omen or only a bit of feminine bluff. Is it the periodical dressing down that man deserves, or is it a genuine development of sociology which calls for serious notice from Mr. Herbert Spencer ? Is it a solemn warning, in short, or only a new finesse of coquetry ? Does woman sing the old song to us with plaintive meaning—

‘I don’t want to play in your yard,
I won’t love you any more’?

Or does she——?” “My dear Jaques,” he broke in, “you are the complacent sentiment-

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talist who always asks a string of silly questions. And you take it for granted that woman has no real interest apart from man, and that when she starts off at a tangent she can be brought back with an indulgent smile, and a little sugar."

"You mistake me," I returned with dignity. "This is a genuine inquiry, and I am soliciting a few statistics." "A few fiddlesticks!" he retorted. "Let me show you the shallowness of your philosophy about women. A year or two ago it was said that the craze for bridge would soon pass, because women could not go on sitting day and night in comparative silence. No game of cards could kill the love of gossip. And yet, at this moment, there are houses where gossip is never heard, where all the talk at dinner turns on cards——" "And a spade is called a spade with innocent freedom!" "You have not grasped the situation," he continued. "Imagine a dinner-party where you are the only guest who does not play, and to whom the terminology of bridge has no more meaning than the theology of Tibet. It is an excellent dinner, but you notice that it is uncomfortably hurried. When you turn to your neighbour, a too dexterous servant whisks away your plate. When you linger

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over some toothsome dainty, you are soon aware that the rest of the company are watching you with cold surprise. You explain to your companion, with a delicately facetious air, that you are no gourmet, but really this is a capital dinner; and she remarks that dinners nowadays are such a waste of time when the green card-tables are waiting in the drawing-room!"

"But your celebrated fund of topical anecdote!" I asked, "what becomes of that?" "Bridge has killed anecdote; the women don't want to hear it." "Nonsense," I said.

"'The ladies of St. James's wear satin on their backs,
They sit all night at ombre with candles made of wax.'

When women did that they lived in the most gossiping age that we know. If ombre did not still their tongues, why should bridge? And why were you asked to that dinner-party if not to tell your stories, constantly recruited from the best sources?" "With your unprogressive mind, my dear Jacques," he answered, "you naturally forget that ombre was an eighteenth-century game, and we are now in the twentieth century. I can only tell you that when we repaired to the green tables which were waiting in the drawing-room, a religious hush fell upon the scene. When an hour had

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passed, and nobody had spoken ten words, I put in one of my liveliest yarns. There was not a smile. I doubt whether they had heard me, but at the end they all rose simultaneously, walked round the tables with a rapt, ecstatic air, and then sat down again, as if they had performed some necessary rite." "Changing seats for luck," I suggested. "A common trick with gamblers." "Much you know about it," said he contemptuously. "When they broke up, one of the women had won a shilling, and had not uttered a syllable for four hours. She put the shilling in her purse with reverence, and her face shone with a spiritual ardour. I may as well tell you she is a girl I am uncommonly fond of, and that all this time she was simply unconscious of my existence."

"But you were asked to the party to meet her, I suppose?" "The reason appeared in all its moral beauty next day, when my hostess sent an urgent message that she wanted to see me. When I arrived, she said, 'I want to talk to you seriously about dear Julia, who has told me that you wish to marry her. The sweet child is one of us, but alas! I fear you can never be. Your presence at our little gathering last night was meant to be a test, and you sadly disappointed me. You talked at dinner

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about worldly things—the theatre and import duties; and when we were deep in bridge, you actually told a story!’ I murmured my contrition, and expressed the hope that she had not seen the point. ‘Heaven forbid,’ said she, ‘and I am sure dear Julia never saw it; but her partner did, for he has written to me this morning to say that it was a most disturbing element, and that he hopes he shall never meet you again. Now, please forgive me if I speak to you very plainly. Julia tells me that you dislike bridge, and that you have refused to learn it, and I can easily understand why. You are a born storyteller, and the whole object of story-telling is to gratify the taste for scandal, a base element of human nature, with which the bridge-player is at war. You must have some good qualities, or dear Julia would not think as much of you as she does; but you cannot enter into the communion of bridge, and therefore you cannot make her really happy. How could she marry a man who would always be telling her stories about import duties and the theatre?’

“Now,” added my friend, “you may have some idea of the new feminine movement of this century.” “But you don’t mean to tell me,” I said, “that you have acquiesced in this interference with your love affair? Don’t you

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suspect there is some game besides bridge at that house? What about the lady's partner, who was so upset by the point of your anecdote?" "Oh, he's old enough to be Julia's great-grandfather. It is astonishing how bridge keeps these old buffers alive when they are dead to everything else. I believe that, in some family vaults, the skeletons sit up every night with the cards, and it's a rule of propriety not to rattle their bones! But I am trying to divert Julia's mind now by taking her out in a fast motor car. When I am driving forty miles an hour, and avoiding market-carts and village geese, it is no time for telling her stories. The fines are troublesome, but I have nearly persuaded her that a honeymoon in a motor would be a beautiful calm—with a little dust, but no gossip!"

When I saw him again, a few weeks after this instructive conversation, he handed me a letter. "I'm done, after all!" he said. "She's married the great-grandfather." "Your motor car was lovely," she wrote, "and to go miles and miles without a sound but the startled quack of the village goose was so peaceful! But when I learned that under the new Bill you would be liable to three months' imprisonment without the option of a fine, I saw to

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what an awful scandal our honeymoon might give rise. Just think what people would say, and how much you would have to say when you come out of gaol! I love you, but I must not run that risk. Only my beloved bridge gives me rest, and to-morrow morning I shall marry the best bridge-player in London! Best for me, and best for you. You need not go to prison now!"

XXIV—*Our Mother Tongue*

PROFESSOR Brander Matthews, of Columbia University, is good enough to report from time to time upon the "healthy development of our mother tongue." He has an article in *Harper's Magazine* upon the proper use of foreign words. Our mother tongue cannot do without the foreigner. He is as needful as the food supply, and you cannot prohibit him like bounty-fed sugar. "Why not speak English?" asks Mr. Matthews, who shows us how to naturalise the foreigner by giving him an English plural, or taking him out of the italics which mark him as an alien. Thus *encore* is French, but *encore* is English. The enthusiast who shouts "Encore!" after a favourite song little thinks how much he owes to France. What *did* he shout before this useful importation? The French enthusiast, by the way, cries "*Bis!*" when he wants the song again. To an English ear it sounds like "Beast!" which may be the reason why our mother tongue has not made it one of the family. But how could the great heart of the people throb responsive to the

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universal sentiment of the music-hall without *au revoir*? "Say *au revoir*, but not good-bye!" warbled many a golden-haired songstress a few seasons ago. Here was the triumphant alien, italics and all. Even Professor Brander Matthews would scarcely venture to turn *au revoir* into "See you later"!

Chaperon is our very own now, and you wonder how Mrs. Grundy managed without it. When the Earl of Southdown complained to Mrs. Rawdon Crawley that, during his visits to the little house in Mayfair, Miss Briggs never left the room, he described the faithful Briggs as a watch-dog. Watch-dog is a crude expression. Chaperon is delicately suggestive of guardianship. "Our British kin," complains Mr. Matthews, "seems to be inclined to prefer the French *costumier* over the simple English costumer; and they like to call a wig-maker a *perruquier*—just as they have lately taken to speaking of a napkin as a *serviette*." And yet if Mr. Matthews will consult any memorable London playbill, he will read beneath the list of characters the plain, severe English legend, "Wigs by Clarkson." There is a story of a famous actor who was visited in his dressing-room at the theatre one evening by a famous singer. The singer,

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who had been invited to see the actor's performance, did not like it, and wondered how he was to avoid the subject. After several desperate excursions, he saw the actor's wig put upon its block. "Capital wig!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm. "Glad there's something you like!" growled the actor.

Serviette, says Mr. Matthews, is "a freak of nomenclature so widespread in the British Isles that the homely napkin-ring is now beginning to be vendable as a *serviette*-ring." Dwellers in boarding-houses where the table-napkin in its ring is the boon companion of the bottle which prolongs itself like the widow's cruse—is this true? Music-hall singers still like to be called *artistes*; the actor's *rôle* is apparently more distinguished than his part; and a comic actress acquires a dainty exotic grace when you call her a *comédienne*. Perhaps such words cling to our theatrical parlance because we have not yet left off taking plays from the French. Mr. Matthews calls upon us to write technic instead of technique, and revery instead of reverie. This is asking too much; but many readers will feel a glow of sympathy with the critic who says, "There is no reason why we should take pleasure in describing a young

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man engaged to be married as a *fiancé*." The word grates upon the sense of fitness because it belongs to a set of marriage customs quite foreign to ours. If the man is a *fiancé*, the girl ought to have a *dot*. But what would you call him? Not Susan's betrothed, for that term is usually feminine; moreover, it has an air of old-fashioned sentiment quite unsuited to modern speech. There is a rank of society in which he would be joyously hailed as Susan's young man; in a rank above that he would be Susan's intended. Neither of these expressions may commend itself to a still higher circle of refinement. Then what is our mother tongue to do? Mr. Matthews is not helpful, and I am forced to suggest that we should borrow from the French again. Why not Susan's "future"? "*Mon futur*," says the French damsel when she indicates the fortunate man. The word may not come from the Faubourg St. Germain; but somehow it makes Susan's lack of *dot* less conspicuous.

Mr. Matthews would have us get rid of the pedantry of classic plurals, and boldly say appendixes and indexes instead of appendices and indices. Surely nobody says indices, but most of us say memoranda, and not memor-

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andums, though we say formulas, and not formulæ. Our mother tongue is too skittish to be bound by any rule of assimilation. Even Mr. Matthews does not insist upon phenomenons. I should like to direct his attention to the editor of *Harper's Magazine*, who is more in need of reproof than his "British kin." The readers of *Harper's* are apprised that a new novel will shortly begin in that periodical. "In this wonderful historical romance of the days of the Spanish Armada, deepened by a pervading psychological interest, the author has not only entered upon a higher field of imaginative fiction than in her previous novels, but seems, if that were possible, to have transcended herself." As an advertisement this is pretty full-blooded, and ought to appeal to the editor's colleague, Mr. Howells, whose taste for historical romance is well known. "It is not great names," proceeds the oracle, "as measured by phenomenal sales, but the quality of the work, that impresses readers." Is Mr. Matthews impressed by an editor who uses "phenomenal" in the sense of wonderful? Mr. Vincent Crummles had a daughter, who was known as the "Infant Phenomenon," a title supposed by her papa to indicate a prodigy. Mr.

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Matthews knows better. Will he impress upon the editor of *Harper's* that there is a graver peril to our mother tongue in that magazine than the coming of the Spanish Armada?

He is fond of dwelling on the advantages of the "short cut," on "simplifications which will be bitterly opposed in the future by the ultra-conservative, just as the simplifications already adopted were opposed in the past by the linguistic Tories of the preceding centuries." Are we "linguistic Tories" if we decline to write crises as the plural of crisis? Mr. Matthews admits that the word has an "unpleasant hissing," but dismisses that as a pedantic objection. He does not see that he is neglecting his "short cut" for a longer word. He wants to say bacilluses instead of bacilli, and taunts the people who, "if they dared, would like to write omnibi." I should like to write omnibi, but it is too late. I acquiesce gracefully in the use of omnibuses, but rather than yield to 'buses I will shed the last drop of my blood. That is a personal eccentricity, no doubt; but as Mr. Matthews expects our "sturdy common sense" to choose the forms of speech which are "the least roundabout and the most

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direct," what have we to do with bacilluses? I remember a dissertation of his, in which it was argued that we should legitimise the ungrammatical phrase "he don't," because it is a shorter cut than "he doesn't." Perhaps Mr. Matthews has lectured at Columbia University on the felicitous embellishment of our mother tongue by the celebrated song, "'E dunno where 'e are." It is a pleasing illustration of one of his principles; but how does it harmonise with crises?

Of all the "linguistic Tories," the most strenuous was Miss Rhoda Broughton, in the years when she denied to her nonchalant heroines the ordinary contractions in colloquial use. "It threatens to rain, does not it?" said Nancy and Joan and Hester, who were by no means prim in other respects. Our mother tongue refused to be trained by these charming young pedagogues. A few years ago some fashionable ladies invented a dialect which carried the theory of "simplifications" very far. I heard one of them say that "the dimpy was divvy," and this, when translated, meant that a certain dinner-party was divine. After this, Mr. Matthews and his bacilluses are "ultra-conservative" indeed.

XXV—*Wells of English*

MR. H. G. WELLS, who would have the English-speaking peoples all speak exactly alike—one accent, one idiom, one intonation—must be disturbed by Professor Lounsbury, of Yale, who continues in *Harper's Magazine* those researches to which I have already adverted. Mr. Lounsbury, being a professor, has a native bias towards authority; but he admits that English pronunciation is a perpetual civil war. The peace of households is destroyed by the vain efforts of seniors to correct the speech of juniors in accordance with the family dictionary, or some supposed standard of usage. A distinguished friend of mine, who has probably addressed to the public ear more words than any man living, arched his expressive eyebrows lately when I used the word "inexplicable" with the accent on the "plic." He asked me why, and I said it was my humour. "Better change it," he remarked drily, "or people will smile." "Let 'em smile," I answered defiantly. What is there to smile at? When you say "inexpressible" you put the accent on the "press";

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when "inconsolable" you linger mournfully on the "so." If a thing is "indisputable," it gets its emphasis from the third and not the second syllable. Why utter a word, as Professor Lounsbury says, as if you were "giving the impression that part of it has been swallowed"? Put the accent on the "ex" in this very word "inexplicable," and you seem to be taking a pill with uneasiness. "There is no authority at all for such a course," says the professor.

Smiling, indeed, is out of place. When the lady who is wooed in Mr. Chevalier's ballad answers "Yus," you are diverted by her Cockney ignorance. If she answered "Yis," you would smile all the same. Permit me to tell you that, in the politest of centuries, the eighteenth, "Yes" was extremely vulgar. You have smiled, no doubt, at the street-urchin who, on the chance of your bounty, enacts a compendious drama at your door on the 5th of November. He approaches with great respect a martial hero who is leaning on a wooden sword. "My lord," says he, "the duke is wowed," and you go off in a burst of ignorant merriment. "Wowed," according to classic authority, is perfectly correct. There used to be a turmoil in the

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pit over John Philip Kemble's pronunciation of certain words. He pronounced "aches," for instance, as if they were "aitches," and the pittites who preferred, like Calverley's school-boy, to rhyme the word with cakes, because "excruciating aches resulted when we ate too many," disputed noisily with the actor. In ruder times than ours a man was not even allowed to pronounce his own name as he thought fit. There is the historic case of Angus Reach, who did not like to rhyme with peach, and called himself "Ree-ak." At dinner on one occasion he was put down by Thackeray, who said, "Mr. Ree-ak, I'll trouble you for a pee-ak." But if my name were Reach I would go to the rack rather than surrender my right to call myself what I pleased.

Professor Lounsbury, I am glad to say, will have none of this intolerance. He relates the anecdote of the poet Rogers, who held that nobody should "contemplate" save with the accent on the "tem." "The now fashionable pronunciation of certain words," said Rogers, "is to me at least offensive. '*Con*-temple' is bad enough; but '*bal*-cony' makes me sick." To please old Rogers, Juliet had to appear in a "balcony." There are still people

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in America who pronounce "museum" with a feline emphasis on the first syllable. I was struck by this in the early days when I made the acquaintance of an American ballad which began thus:—

" Old blind hoss
Going to Jerusalem,
Kicked so high
Put him in a *Mu*-seum
Down in Alabama !"

My intimacy with the "blind hoss," who became a scientific trophy of his native State, was contemporary with my first essay in the pronunciation of Euclid. The horrid hour comes back to me as vividly as yesterday. I stood up in class to recite the exposition of that deadly masterpiece on the isosceles triangle, but had got no further than "the angles at the base of an issoseals," when a contemptuous voice informed me that it was not a fish. It was my first experience of popular derision. How the boys laughed—puppets to an usher's jest and servile to a shrewish tongue! But as Euclid's word has become English, surely my natural instinct was sound!

Let no man snub you with a dictionary. Dr. Bacon, a New England divine, was reproached with some pronunciation which was

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not "according to Webster." Webster lived in his parish, so Dr. Bacon delivered himself thus: "What right has Webster to dictate my pronunciation? He is one of my parishioners, and he ought to get his pronunciation from me, and not I from him." But you must not let yourself be brow-beaten by the pulpit. "Not a single one of our pronouncing dictionaries," says Mr. Lounsbury, "is a final authority, not even the concurrent voice of all of them put together." And if all the pulpits concurred with the first curate I ever listened to, who had a painful habit of saying "know-ledge" when he meant "knolledge," it would still be your duty to protest, even at the risk of excommunication. The oracle I chiefly lose is Dr. Parr. Somebody in his presence put the accent on the fourth syllable of *Alexandria*, and cited the authority of Bentley. "Bentley and I," said Dr. Parr, "may call it *Alexandria*, but you had better pronounce it *Alexandria*." No unity of the English-pronouncing peoples for Parr! His example makes me yearn to hold converse with Mr. Wells, so as to devise a system of pronunciation distinctive of ourselves. It would be so pleasant to say to a presumptuous scholar, "Wells and I call it 'wind,' with the 'i' long; but you had better

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keep it short, like the common people." Why they have kept it short, despite the poets, who rhyme "wind" with "mind" and "find," no human being is able to tell.

Mr. Wells, as I understand him, is for establishing a sort of lingual Zollverein; no Colonial preference; no "dumping" of American phrases on our classic speech; no excuse for an erring intonation on the plea that it is traditional in Nevada or at the Antipodes. Mount a certain Time-Machine which Mr. Wells has made famous, and you may reach a day in the remote future, when our magistrates will try offences against the standard of English, and in the current police news you may read something like this: "At Vine Street, Patrick Molloy appeared yesterday on a serious charge of mispronunciation, and the use of words unknown to the Education Code. Constable Jones (G. 506) deposed that on the previous night the prisoner had jostled him in Piccadilly, called him a 'spalpeen,' and made use of a shocking expression which sounded like 'begorra!' The prisoner became violently excited, and his accent was so offensive as to lead to a breach of the peace. The magistrate (to the prisoner): 'What have you to say?' Prisoner: 'The fact is, your honour,

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I had been dining with some friends from Ireland, and after a keg or two I got just a bit of the brogue.' The magistrate: 'Brogue! How dare you utter such a word in this court?' Prisoner: 'Bedad, your honour——' The magistrate (sternly): 'Silence! Fourteen days' hard labour!' The prisoner was then removed to the cells."

But Professor Lounsbury alleges that an authoritative standard of English for the world is "a task beyond the power of any one person or any number of persons to accomplish." He says this must be so as long as we continue to write one language and speak another. Our marvellous spelling has resisted all the efforts of reformers; and even Mr. Wells, perceiving that it must be overthrown, commends the job to some other strategist. Shall we ever see that heroic genius? "Most of us love our orthography," says Mr. Lounsbury, "for its uncouthness, its barbarousness, its unfitness to do the very work for which orthography is presumed to exist at all." Men of letters are distinguished by this misplaced devotion. And you may be sure that even when the new era has dawned, and repression is doing its work at Vine Street, one or two of them will be found to stand in the dock with Patrick Molloy.

XXVI—*As it was in the Beginning*

AN American writer warns us to expect no new ideas in the twentieth century. We are to take the prospect with equanimity, for, when you come to think of it, there has been nothing new in speculation since the days of Greek philosophy. Darwin's theory can be traced back to Heraclitus. You would find it difficult to deliver an original discourse at the Royal Institution without repeating Plato. All the literary artists borrow from their predecessors. They repel the charge with indignation, not reflecting that the air is full of minute particles of the dead, so that the very act of breathing is unconscious plagiarism. You will find "The Pilgrim's Progress" buried in old French that Bunyan never heard of; and when Poe explained with such complacent elaboration how he wrote "The Raven," he did not know that it was first written in Chinese two thousand years ago. This, no doubt, is why the lawyers have always been so grudging with literary copyright. If a man buys a watch, it becomes his exclusive property, and cannot be taken from him, or

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from his family, except with criminal intent. But if he writes a book, his proprietary interest has a limit of time. And he ought to think himself lucky, seeing that he has merely served up some other man's ideas, as Darwin served up Heraclitus.

I don't say this is entirely convincing; but it ought to reconcile us to the inevitable barrenness of the twentieth century. Don't flatter yourself that you may live to see men fly. The flying man will be merely a repetition of a gentleman in Greek mythology. Besides, intelligent people, says our American comforter, are already bored by science. That is why they welcomed Mr. Balfour's "Foundations of Belief." He had no theory of his own, but he made fun of others. Mr. Howells implores novel-readers to listen to reason, and ponder their social responsibilities. They are so tired of reason that they clamour for historical romances, in which social responsibilities are clean forgotten. Tolstoy offered a fresh sensation by the frankness of his insight; but even a fearless dissection of the inner man loses its charm. Zola's idealism and naturalism are both shelved. Does anybody read "*La Rêve*," or even "*La Terre*"? When it was said that the author of "*La Rêve*" had taken flight into

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the realm of angelic innocence, a distinguished French critic remarked that to Zola with wings he preferred Zola on all fours. I repeated this epigram to a conscientious student of modern literature, and he said, "Zola? Oh, you mean the man who found the forty-eight hairpins?" If this question were set by an examiner, "Where did M. Zola find the forty-eight hairpins?" how many candidates would be ploughed! By mere luck, I happen to know the answer, and I mean to keep it to myself as one of those rare accomplishments that distinguish a man in the crowd.

"Who can plume himself," says Anatole France in his delightful essay, "Fools in Literature," "that he has never said anything silly?" Who can plume himself that, if he has never had an original idea, neither has anybody else? With no pretension to originality, I have discovered a man who is original without knowing it. Dining in one of my favourite grill-rooms, I overheard the conversation of two young bucks of the City at an adjoining table. They talked for a while of the sad reverse of fortune that had befallen some friends. "They had three thousand a year, and lived at the rate of ten thousand. I remember old Mrs. G.'s

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horror when I told her I had ridden in an omnibus. She said it was vulgar. 'My boy would never ride in an omnibus.' Six months after they went to smash I met young G. in a 'bus going to Paddington. He punched my ticket!" Then the talk turned on literary matters, and the other youngster struck out an idea which, to me, was as a nugget to a gold-seeker. "I say, old chap, who wrote 'Mansfield Park'?" "Oh, I forget her name for the moment. The same woman that wrote 'Pride and Prejudice.'" "Why, of course, I remember her now—Jane Eyre!" I concealed my joy with a great effort. You see it would never do to let such a genius know that he had contributed a new idea to a jaded universe. Once make him self-conscious, and he might never utter a golden thought again. So I put my readers on their honour never to repeat this story. If they hear a hoarse murmur that sounds like "Swear!" rising from below, they will know that I am adjuring them from the cellarage, like the ghost of Hamlet's father.

If there is a man who has bitter reason to deplore the lack of original ideas, he must be the thief of Gainsborough's Duchess. Picture him brooding over his booty for twenty-five

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years, and then finding no better use for it than restitution! Don't tell me that restitution is an original idea, for there are cases without number in which stolen property has been restored by compunction. Is it compunction in this case? Is it cynical to suggest that a quarter of a century gives a thief ample time to turn over all the possible alternatives. Plainly, the canvas could not be sold or disposed of in any way that would yield him a substantial interest on his audacity. Think of him waiting all these years for an inspiration, staring at the portrait in secret until the very sight of the fair Georgiana became hateful to him, and the art of the painter was submerged in contempt. He is reported to have grown honest, and to be leading an obscure, but highly respectable, life. For his own sake this should be true; but would it not be more original to have persuaded himself that the picture is not genuine, that it is neither Gainsborough nor the Duchess? I cannot help cherishing an immoral hope that he is now writing a pamphlet entitled "The Sham Duchess: By the Fool who Stole Her."

There is an amusing writer amongst us who does not despair of the twentieth century. He admits that the Caucasian is played out,

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and that Shakespeare, of whom he has no very high opinion, exhausted human nature, as we know it, for the purposes of the drama. But he expects humanity to be transformed, in order to provide the poets, novelists, and dramatists of another age with fresh themes. He foresees a time when there will be no more innocence or guilt, no more revenge, idolatry, self-seeking, or any of the passions that now make life so interesting, and its artistic representation so monotonous. But what is to supplant them? Any answer to this question would have the merit of originality; but I regret to say there is no answer. The late Mr. Bellamy, who described with so much gratification the triumph of Socialism in his romance, "Looking Backward," entered into very minute details of the commercial and municipal economy of his new Jerusalem. But he said not a word about its literature and drama. To this day we have not a notion how the complete absorption of egotism in the service of the State is to be expressed in art. Every one can see that it is a beautiful ideal: no more selfishness, no more grasping, no more competition; every man in his proper place; no more envy. Crime having disappeared, you can never be guilty; nor can you take

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credit for superior morality. With no conflict of interests, no emulation in good works, no good works, which will be unnecessary, what is to be the function of drama, and what the salt of private conversation? Without the breath of gossip, and without the ghost of innuendo, how is the Jaques of a future day to earn a decent living?

Let me tell you the French fable of the Persian king. He ordered his sages to write the history of mankind. They were thirty years at it, and brought him 6000 volumes on twelve camels. "Too long," he said, "write me an abridgment." After twenty years they brought an abridgment in 1500 volumes on three camels. "I am too old to master this," he said, "abridge again." In ten years they compiled 500 volumes, and loaded one camel. The king, now very infirm, protested once more, and so five years were spent on one volume, which came to him on an ass, like Roscius. He was dying, and the chief of the sages, also near his end, said, "Sire, I can sum up the history of mankind in these words: They were born, they suffered, they died." Don't you think that will always be the gist of it, however original we may become?

XXVII—*The Art and Glory of Eating*

THERE'S no denying it; we can't get away from the subject of food. It comes up even in the most tremendous crises in the fate of nations. Just as your nerves are strung to the highest pitch by the battle news from the Korean Straits, what does your eye light upon in a corner of the morning paper? Simply a warning from Baron Suyematsu against our neglect, not of some important element in the politics of the Far East, but of a vegetable which is greatly relished in Japan! The Mikado's dynasty has eaten it for centuries; there may be some virtue in it which explains the national character; and yet we leave it to grow wild, and seldom give it a thought except in landscapes at the Royal Academy. It is bracken, and it ought to be plucked in its "curling stage" in the early spring. "If plucked at the right time," says the discerning Suyematsu, who is evidently something more than a diplomat, "and properly prepared, it can be eaten as asparagus, which vegetable it to some extent resembles; in another form it makes a good substitute for spinach." We

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have never done learning from Japan! You may be indifferent, in your Western pride, to the moral precepts which go to make *bushido*; but when it comes to a new vegetable, a possible rival of asparagus, a substitute for spinach—that everlasting spinach!—who will say his heart is not stirred by a grateful impulse?

And what if the bracken that runs sadly to waste in our island should have in it a tonic for the national spirit? I shall not be surprised to hear that among the folk-songs of Japan there is a strain like this:—

“When the nerve begins to slacken,
Let us pluck the early bracken;
Let us cook the curly bracken,
It will save the cheek from pallor,
It will fill the heart with valour,
It will have a savour pleasant
To the taste of Prince and peasant.
Fate their souls can never blacken
While they eat the curly bracken!”

A little exaggerated, perhaps; but that is the way with folk-songs. You may depend upon it, at any rate, that the Japanese have none of that shamefacedness about food which is the mark of our superior culture. I am not sure that the man who eats too much is a worse citizen than the man who despises his meals in the name of ethics. “Sir, respect

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your dinner," wrote Thackeray in the delightful essay which he called "Memorials of Gormandising." "Idolise it, enjoy it properly. You will be by many hours in the week, many weeks in the year, and many years in your life the happier if you do. Don't tell us that it is not worthy of a man. All a man's senses are worthy of employment, and should be cultivated as a duty."

For the moralist who professed a lofty disdain for the choice of viands, who said, "Give me a slice of meat, and a fig for your gourmands!" Thackeray, who was a bit of a moralist himself, has no mercy. "You fancy it is very virtuous and manly all this. Nonsense, my good sir; you are indifferent because you are ignorant, because your life is passed in a narrow circle of ideas, and because you are bigotedly blind and pompously callous to the beauties and excellencies beyond you." Then he proceeds to discourse for many pages on the "beauties and excellencies" of dinners in Paris, where this essay was written; not costly dinners, such as you find now in the diatribes against the luxury of the age, but dinners within the means of the struggling literary man. There was a dinner at a club, where ten people fared sumptuously at fifteenpence

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a head. They had pheasants amongst other things! Such a dinner at such a price nowadays would make a club almost too famous. How the candidates would swarm! I believe they would force their way into the hall in a solid phalanx, and insist upon being elected without formality.

Another of those Paris dinners consisted of beefsteak and partridge. When the steak was finished "we put bits of bread into the silver dish and wistfully sopped up the gravy." Two Britons did this in a foreign land, and one of them was not ashamed to record it. Nor was he ashamed to say that "the soothing plant of Cuba is sweeter to the philosopher after dinner than the prattle of all the women in the world." I suppose a remark like that brought down feminine anathema on bachelor feasts sixty years ago. Such innocent and cheap indulgence, it may have been thought, had a tendency to depress the marriage market. But to-day the growth of restaurants is coincident with a change of manners, and men sit at public tables with their nearest and dearest and the "soothing plant," listening deferentially to the talk they would not dream of calling "prattle." Woman has become an expert diner-out; the blameless matron is a

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connoisseur of entrées and a judge of dry champagne. No marriageable damsel seeks to inspire a sentimental interest by professing that she is never hungry. Why, I have known her to refuse soup for the very reason Thackeray assigns for discarding that dish. "I would recommend a man to reflect well before he orders soup for dinner. My notion is, that you eat as much after soup as without it, but you *don't eat with the same appetite.*" Yes, I have heard the charming Julia say that very thing, when she has glanced at the dimensions of the *menu*; and I have never thought this frankness the least admirable of her engaging qualities.

But there is a blight on the modern dinner-party—the blight of haste. Whether it be the habit of driving in motor cars at an illegal speed or of hurrying the meal so as to repair as soon as possible to the bridge-table, there is a growing tendency to race through the courses. I say this is disrespectful to your dinner, and I invoke the shade of Thackeray to pronounce it *lèse majesté* in the worst degree. The art and glory of eating are grievously impaired if you gobble up the dishes instead of gently absorbing them into a physiological symphony, to the accompaniment of—what

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shall I say?—the music of Julia's voice. Agreeable conversation, in which you bear your part manfully, is absolutely essential to full enjoyment. It is therefore deplorable to notice, when you glance round the table suddenly, that the rest of the company have finished the course you have scarcely begun, and are regarding you with a gloomy stare.

Kind friends, this is not the way to dine. You may not appreciate the æsthetic objection; let me give you another. Your way of dining leads to dyspepsia! I know a very distinguished man of letters who must have been a gobbler in early life, for he is now compelled to eat so slowly that he nearly always dines alone! With his fine imagination he has persuaded himself that he likes it, and that to have his eggs and bacon stark cold of a morning, before he is half-way through his breakfast, is one of the deepest joys. But if (as I suspect) you have no imagination to speak of, my gobbling brothers, what a life for you when you have to sit in solitude masticating cold bacon!

XXVIII—*Dreams*

I HAVE often envied those people who have the pleasant gift of dreaming interesting dreams, and never fail to relate them with great precision at breakfast next morning, or to set them down in diaries, scrupulously dated, so that when a dream comes true there is unimpeachable evidence of the oracle. But in dreams I have no luck. They are to me, for the most part, like a primitive kinematograph, which vibrates so violently that it is only a crowd of blurred images. But yesterday morning there was a difference. Instead of waking with the usual exasperating sense of having seen or done remarkable things which I could not recall, I had a very clear picture in my mind of a great commotion at the club. Agitated members glared at me, and declared that this scandalous affair should be reported at once to the committee. In a trice I was summoned before that august tribunal; every man looked grave; it was said to be a clear case, and I felt somehow that it was a clear case; but what it was all about I have not the slightest idea.

Now, by an odd coincidence, there came to

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me at breakfast a copy of the *Nineteenth Century*, containing an article called "The Way of Dreams," by Lady Currie. The night before her first London dinner-party, she dreamed that she was taken in to dinner by a very ugly old gentleman. This actually happened ; for the young man who had been assigned to her at the party did not turn up, and she fell into the hands of an octogenarian who apologised to her for being "an old creature like a chimpanzee." She told him her dream, and he told her that his mother, who had been dead seventy years, regularly haunted his dreams by pursuing him upstairs with a birch-rod. His philosophy of the dream-state was that "something or somebody desired to communicate with the sleeper, just as something or somebody might desire to play upon a pianoforte or upon a stringed instrument." Why his mother should want to play upon him with a birch-rod he did not say ; but he explained the confused nature of dreams by "something irresponsive in the brain of the dreamer." This suggestion startled me. Was it possible that a dead, but still beneficent, kinsman had tried to warn me in my sleep against that mysterious affair at the club ? Was he anxious to say, "My dear fellow, with the best intentions in the

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world you are going to get yourself into a confounded mess unless you take care"? Take care of what? It is all very well to talk about the sleeper's irresponsible brain; but if people send you warnings in your sleep, why don't they take care, instead of shuffling the responsibility on me?

This is the more disquieting because Lady Currie relates a remarkable experience of a still more alarming tenor. She dreamt that she was calling at a house in a squalid street. The door was opened by a dreadful-looking woman with a beard; there was a smell of soapsuds in the passage; two men like undertakers seemed to be moving a coffin into a room. Lady Currie thought she went into this room and noted the furniture and the curtains; then she looked out of the window, and saw a soldier of the Life Guards in his scarlet jacket, a young woman on each arm. A month after, Lady Currie called at a house on an errand of charity. As soon as the door opened, she smelt soapsuds, and saw the dreadful woman with the beard. In a room upstairs she found the furniture she had seen in the dream; and when she looked out of the window, sure enough appeared the Life Guardsman and his charmers. When she had made a

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few more visits, she learned that a ruffian in the house had on three occasions been prevented by some trivial accident from attempting to rob and possibly to murder her. Lady Currie complains that the premonition, so precise as to furniture, a harmless beard, and a quite irrelevant soldier—the soldier, as usual, was not evidence—totally obliterated the miscreant who had designs on her jewellery. Here, I think, she is a little unjust. What of the undertakers and the coffin? But it may be urged that one needs a stronger hint of grave personal risk; a gentleman behind a door with a knife, for instance, would be more useful than a soldier with a girl on each arm. Moreover, as nothing happened to Lady Currie, what was the good of the dream after all?

This is the intolerable complexity of such visions. Had Lady Currie understood the warning, and made off as soon as she scented the soapsuds, she would have taken a precaution which, as the course of events showed, was unnecessary. She came scatheless through the danger before she was aware of it. That clear case against me at the club may be brought to naught by a train of circumstances of which I am blissfully ignorant. Or it may not. What is a poor dreamer to do? It is a very different

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case from Laurence Oliphant's. He told Lady Currie how he dreamed in Jermyn Street of a "sandy-bearded son of toil," who gazed at him with grey eyes, "having in them a sad look of appeal." In the middle of his forehead was a large hole, dripping blood. A year later, in an American forest, Oliphant met some English navvies, one of whom looked hard at him. It was the man of the dream. There was no hole in his forehead then; and if Oliphant had joined the party, who were on their way to a local beershop, he might have saved the man's life. But he went thoughtlessly for a ride, and when he returned in an hour he found that the poor navvy had been killed in a quarrel by the blow of a pickaxe. Was Oliphant responsible for his death? If not, what was the use of dreaming of a stranger whose looks said plainly, "You are to remember me when we meet again, and save me from getting this hole in my forehead." I saw a member of the committee yesterday looking at me with a startled and rather wistful air. Can it be that I have appeared to him in a dream as an innocent victim of that coming scandal?

Another peculiarity of dreams is their propensity to practical joking. When Lady Currie was young, she once had a chaperon in an old

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country-house, and on New Year's Eve this lady suggested that whatever the company might dream that night should be taken as bound to happen in the coming year. Next morning everybody was a delighted narrator of dreams except the chaperon. She had "black lines under her fine eyes," and looked ten years older. The poor lady had dreamed that she was at a funeral service in church when Death appeared "in the horrid semblance of a skeleton," and shot a black arrow at her from a bow. She dodged this, and went out into a churchyard where there was a newly-made grave. Turning away, she found that her dress was pinned to the ground by another black arrow, and she saw the skeleton grinning at her behind a tombstone. Quite sure that this dream was an omen, she fell into melancholy, "ate nothing, and went unusually often to church," until it was thought she had some fatal malady. Towards the end of the year she made fifty little packets of souvenirs for her friends, and put postage stamps on them all. They were to be delivered on New Year's morning when she would be dead. But a week after that, Lady Currie found her joyfully removing the stamps with the help of hot water. A twelvemonth of penance, you may say, must

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have done her good ; but is any sound moral principle observed when penance is exacted on false pretences ?

Then dreams are interpreted in a hundred ways. Who knows that to dream of skeletons and funerals does not mean longevity ? In the East, as Lady Currie reminds us, these things are not left to guesswork. You take your dream to a learned interpreter. A Turkish lady dreamt that her son in the army was officially shot by a file of soldiers. She hurried to the interpreter, but made it appear that the young man was the son of a friend. "Oh," said the interpreter, "to be shot in a dream is to rise to the highest honours." "It is my own son!" cried the joyous mother. "Very sorry, madam," said the interpreter. "But as you mentioned another gentleman the honours must be his!" And they were ; so the disappointed woman told Lady Currie. I am going to submit my dream to Lord Kelvin, without pretending that it happened to a friend. For it may turn out that a club scandal means a legacy from an Australian uncle !

XXIX—*American Reticence*

IN California, as I learn from an American magazine, there is a "law of privacy." It is based on the theory that a man's personality belongs to himself, and not to the newspapers. He may take them into partnership by authorising the publication of his portrait; but unauthorised publication may land the offender in a heavy fine, and even in the county gaol. This sanctity of the person does not extend to holders of public offices, nor to convicted criminals. The moment you are qualified for a State salary or penal servitude, your portrait becomes the lawful prey of art editors. Dismissed from office by the uprising of the electorate, your features are veiled in privacy once more. It is as if Mr. Balfour were at the mercy of the photographer and printer, and as if Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman could consign them both to dungeons. But for caricaturists there is no room in California. Any caricature which "in any manner reflects upon the honour, integrity, manhood, virtue, reputation, or business or political motives of the person so caricatured, or tends to expose the person so caricatured to public

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hatred, ridicule, or contempt," is visited with condign penalties. It is no use going to California with the idea that you can make a decent livelihood by drawing funny pictures of Californian statesmen. At steamship offices in London, when you want to take a passage to America, you are asked this startling question, "Are you a polygamist?" If you intimate that you are bound for San Francisco, there will probably be this supplementary inquiry: "Are you a caricaturist?"

Further, I must warn the emigrant that he cannot write in California with the freedom which is supposed to distinguish American journalism. If a man is dead, you must not "blacken his memory"; if he is alive, you must not publish his "natural or alleged defects." Experiments in either line are "subject to a penalty of one thousand dollars for each offence." This makes candour in obituary notices an expensive luxury. Historians and biographers who do well in California may sometimes find it prudent to employ such material as exists beyond the borders of the State. There is, indeed, a possibility of eminent men living and dying there in oblivion because no chronicler is allowed to linger on their infirmities. Controversy is the breath of

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fame, and how can a man be famous if he is neither abused nor vindicated? After a time Californian statesmen will make secret advances to the silenced masters of vituperation. "This system doesn't pay," they will remark. "We may be as pure as snow, but we are badly in need of a little calumny. Our friends are becoming apathetic. Calumny is the thing to stir them up. The public is bored because nobody dares to say that we are not arch-angels. Please make it hot again for our natural or alleged defects, and we will recoup you for the damages!"

But it is proposed to paralyse the national inquisitiveness, and establish "the principle of an inviolate personality, or the right to be let alone." Compared to this, the Declaration of Independence was a puny affair. Think of seventy millions of Americans, every one of them jealously guarding the family privacy, and never infringing a neighbour's. I do not say this prodigious self-denial is impossible to so enterprising a people. Just as Mr. Carnegie gives away his money, so the American journals may abandon all those luxuries of sensation which seem most dear to them. We had a reign of saints in this country for about a dozen years. It was followed by a long period of

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violent debauch. I fear that the Puritan Commonwealth of American privacy would be succeeded by the Restoration of riotous gossip. This, no doubt, is the miserable worldling's attitude toward deep and searching reform. It has been adopted by some of the American courts in dealing with the great doctrine of inviolate personality. In the World's Fair at Chicago the statue of a lady named Schuyler, inscribed "Woman as a Philanthropist," stood beside the statue of another lady, called "Woman as a Reformer." The family of Mrs. Schuyler, who was dead, pleaded that this sculpture would have annoyed her, more especially by her proximity to the other statue; but after three trials the grievance was dismissed as "too trivial to excite any real mental tress or injury." With equal callousness an English court might dismiss the plea that no waxwork figure should be exhibited at Madame Tussaud's unless the kinsfolk of the original were permitted to select his *vis-à-vis*.

In another case, the widow of an eminent inventor sought to "restrain the publication of his biography and picture, upon the distinct ground that it was an invasion of her right of privacy." Full of the new doctrine which is partially inscribed on the statute-book of

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California, she maintained that her husband's memory was her exclusive property. She might write a biographical fragment on his tombstone; but for a strange hand to intervene, and flaunt a book through the world, was a sacrilegious intrusion. Here you have the great principle in its most austere form; but the American judges would not tolerate it. "Under our laws," they said, "one can speak and publish what he desires, provided he commit no offence against public morals or private reputation." They have laid it down, moreover, that any restraint of published opinion would have to be extended to speech, that an embargo on printed gossip must be logically followed by an embargo on conversation, "for one, as well as the other, invades the right to be absolutely let alone." Well, why should not Wisconsin, envious of California, enact that no citizen, outside of the family circle, may discuss his neighbour's affairs, and that each repetition of a scandalous anecdote be punished with fine and imprisonment? The county gaols would soon be full. Wisconsin gossips would probably migrate to other States; but this manœuvre might quicken the spread of the new doctrine through all the Legislatures, until it became far mightier than the precept of Monroe.

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The chief characteristic of the American is that he wants to know. He cannot know if every personality is secluded from observation, if no editor is allowed to print any citizen's "record." But such is the force of new ideas in America that I should not be surprised to see the whole people resolved to better the example of California. This should have a remarkable influence upon literature. American readers are at present wrapped up in historical romance, which Mr. Howells calls "ignorance and imbecility." But historical romance is chiefly concerned with the private lives of real personages who have long been helpless dust. The Legislature of New York State, at the instance of Mr. Howells, will declare that the historic dead must be protected against the novelist, and that any work of fiction going further back than Mr. McKinley's Administration shall be suppressed, and the author and publisher locked up in a county gaol. Mr. Howells would enjoy a triumph so richly deserved, but I fancy it would be brief. A newly-awakened conscience, especially a national conscience, is terribly open-eyed. The American conscience would soon perceive that all fiction is gossip, and that contemporary gossip is the worst of all. Historical romancers gossip

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about people who have been dead for ages ; but the people in Mr. Howells's novels are walking about now. They are well known in Ohio. At Oshkosh you run against them in the street. Is it likely that the novelist who makes so free with the private affairs of living men and women will be let off on the plea that his characters are creatures of fancy ?

I foresee, then, a great change in the mind and habits of the American democracy. History, biography, and fiction will be abolished, and the newspapers will confine themselves to the Wall Street quotations. Political campaigns will be notable for high-breeding and the absence of excitement. Conversation will mark the extinction of curiosity. I am not idealist enough to believe that society on this exalted plane can endure. It will relapse into a scandal which will paint the inmost recesses of privacy a brilliant scarlet. But it will leave to future generations a memory to point a thousand morals.

XXX—A *Race-Meeting*

I HAD been much impressed that morning by a picture of M. Maeterlinck in one of the illustrated papers. He was driving his motor car with the determined look which, from a thousand expressions of the human countenance, you would at once single out as motorific. "And this is the poet," I reflected, "who would abolish action in drama, who thinks the vehemence of Othello primitive and unspiritual, who would have us, on or off the stage, commune with our souls in silence. Here he is in a motor car, which beats the most vengeful Othello at snorting, and fills the air with the hum as of a thousand hives. Perhaps it is the poet's fancy that he is living the life of the bee, and sipping the honey of ideas from the landscape when speeding through it at forty miles an hour." At the club I had picked up Sir Henry Thompson's treatise on the motor car, and found that astonishing veteran approaching ninety years with the liveliest interest in the science of locomotion. When most old gentlemen are content to survey life from an easy-chair, and to deplore the intemperate

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hurry of the age, Sir Henry Thompson writes a sympathetic book about machines which skim the plain much more swiftly than Camilla, to the horror of rural constables and the Guildford magistrates.

This was an odd preparation for my drive that morning on a coach, the old-fashioned coach-and-four, very little altered from the coach that was superseded in travel by the railway some sixty years ago, though lighter and smarter than that ancient vehicle. This is not O'Connell's "Derby dilly with its six insides," for nobody sits inside. The interior is a cloak-room, a bandbox, a dressing-case. You sit outside much as aforetime, and play the horn, when it is in order. On this occasion something had happened to that instrument, and it gave out a thin and heart-rending wail, which was suppressed as impertinent to the festival of the day. For the coach was going to a race-meeting, the first I had ever seen, a confession which tickled the company so much that they agreed to claim it as a common experience. "Our first race-meeting!" they murmured joyously. "Do you happen to know whether the jockey rides on the horse's neck or holds on by the tail?" Then the hum of a motor car smote our ears. "Gentle-

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men," I said, "as this is our first race-meeting, don't you think we are rather lacking in respect to the spirit of the age? If Sir Henry Thompson now were going to a race, do you suppose he would be content to sit on the top of a coach?" "Do you mean to say," they responded vehemently, "that you would rather be on a motor?" I explained that personal preference had nothing to do with the case. I was happy on the coach, but could not shut my eyes or ears to the progress of invention, which was humming past us with triumphant energy.

"My dear Jaques," said our host, "you do not perceive the fitness of things. When you drive to a horse-race, it is proper to drive horses. Talk about respecting the spirit of the age! How can you respect the racehorse by driving up to the course on a puff of petroleum?" If Maeterlinck were here——" "Maeterlinck!" growled the company. "What on earth——?" "Yes," I said, "he would show you that with a forty-horse-power motor you would have the spirits of forty horses instead of four. That is why he drives a motor car, you may depend. The horses are not there, but he sees them with his poet's eye. He sees forty magnificent steeds tossing their

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heads far away in front of him. We see only four—charming animals, I admit, but——” At that moment a motor car came humming round a corner, and one of the horses, rearing, upset a cyclist, who rolled in the dust, but was on his feet in an instant, clamouring for compensation. “Now this happily illustrates my point,” I continued, when the turmoil had subsided. “If you had Maeterlinck’s forty horses they might all be wild, and rearing all the time; but they would not damage any cyclists, and so you would have nothing to pay. This is how poetry adapts itself to the practical concerns of life. By clinging to a tradition, we are not only out of date but horribly prosaic. My dear friends, there is no romance of old times about the coach. I have no doubt that somebody is photographing us with the kinetoscope for a picture with this title, ‘Going to the Races: Old Stagers, 1902.’ And this is our first race-meeting!”

When we arrived at the course I was struck by the stillness and solemnity of the crowd. A race-meeting, I had always understood, was a popular carnival. I expected minstrelsy and merry-making. Two gentlemen hazarded a little music, but their hearts were not in it. One of them played the mandoline by force

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of habit, while he carried on an earnest conversation about his private affairs. Taking a little stroll, I met a sombre-looking stranger who said, "Intruder's the favourite." "Ah!" I returned. "It's an omen!" "It's six to four," said he. "My friend," I put it to him persuasively, "don't venture odds against omens." "Omens be blowed!" he retorted with a certain briskness. "Where d'ye think you've come to?" "I have come to see Intruder, but not the Intruder you mean. Hark! When the motor hums, my Intruder comes. It is the death-knell of the racehorse! Don't you see that the shadow of this coming change lies heavily on the spirits of the people? How languid they are! Look! The winner passes the post with scarcely a cheer. Nobody cares. There's a mounted policeman thrown from his horse. Time was when this would have made merriment for an afternoon. Nobody laughs. What does this mean?" "Means that your top storey wants a spring cleanin'," said the stranger promptly. "No, my friend, you have the quick humour of your class, but no divination. What it means is that the horse is about to disappear." "Oh, horse-stealin' is *your* job!" he suggested playfully. "To disappear," I went on, "before

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the forces of mechanism. This pastime of racing will endure, no doubt, but in a different form. Chariots will urge their wild career round the course, drawn by viewless horses, far swifter than your favourite. It is the sense of that which makes this crowd dumbly discontented. They feel that the speed of the racehorse is a mockery. They yearn for the humming, maddening whirl of the Intruder!"

I developed this theory at luncheon on the top of the coach. "As this is our first race-meeting," I said, "it is important to settle one great principle. Is it the horse we love, or the speed of the horse!" "The love of horses," said our host, "is ingrained in the hearts of the English people. You cannot imagine England without a national breed of horses. Racing stimulates the breed, and betting stimulates racing. You remember how clear that was made by a noble Duke, whose attachment to the Turf is the romantic side of his character." "Yes, but apart from his speed, what does the public care about a racehorse? The horse is being ousted from the road by a machine with a vastly greater pace. Why not from the course? Besides, when the people have grasped Maeterlinck's idea, they will know that forty poetical coursers

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in the mind's eye are far swifter than any animal that was ever bred by betting. No, the horse is very well in a stately pageant, or in an old lady's phaeton in the country, or ambling gently round a circus with a dazzling creature striking beautiful attitudes on his back. These four greys of yours, my dear friend, would be in their proper places to-day if you were an hereditary monarch going to your coronation. Unhappily, that is not the case, or I might be appointed keeper of your Royal conscience." "Six to four," said a voice below. It was the sombre-looking stranger's. "Oh, go it!" he exclaimed, "this ain't a race-meetin', this ain't. This is the openin' of Parlyment!"

He looked at us as if we were taking the bread out of his mouth. That night I had a dream of M. Maeterlinck winning the Derby in a motor car, with Sir Henry Thompson a good second. Then came a procession of dejected men, who cried fiercely to me, "Bettin' don't breed motors. The public won't back 'em. We've got to make an honest livin' some other way." "Where are you going to make it?" I asked with respectful curiosity. "On the Stock Exchange," they answered. This, you will admit, was a very fantastic vision.

XXXI—*The Organ*

MR. BARRIE must beware. In his new play he shows his hand a little too plainly. I have met members of the leisured class who could not tolerate the "Admirable Crichton." "I wanted to kick him," said one of them to me, quite frankly and simply, when I praised the butler. The kicking was merited because Mr. Crichton, of the servants' hall, presumed to have more brains on a desert island than a peer of the realm. Mr. Barrie has now passed from the brain to another organ, which plays a more active part in the lives of all of us. He has studied the diet of the leisured class, and finds it excessive. There was a time when the aristocracy was content with three large meals a day; but we have the testimony of Mr. George Russell that some illustrious personages must now have six. Mr. Russell stayed in a country house with a pair of them. They breakfasted in private, made an excellent luncheon with the house-party, consumed great quantities of sandwiches and cake at tea-time, dined copiously, supped alone, and had a cold chicken and a

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bottle of claret installed in the bedroom, that they might not starve in the course of the night. When Mr. Barrie read that, he must have felt that it was high time to apply the moral influence of the stage to the organ which is more active than the brain.

That member of the leisured class, quoted above, has already expressed his resentment. "Disgusting, I call it!" he has remarked to me with his artless directness. "I am a patron of the drama. I like to have a box and take my friends to the play after dinner. Shan't take 'em to Wyndham's! What! Patronise a piece which insults a man for dining well! It's cowardly!" "Hitting below the belt," I suggested. "Yes, by George!" said he. "Right in the pit of one's——" "Of the organ," I interrupted. "As there is going to be a heated controversy on this subject, let us avoid expressions which are plain to the point of coarseness. In that, at any rate, Barrie has set an excellent example. He symbolises the organ with a poetical figment, and even gives it an endearing feminine name. Don't show yourself inferior in delicacy." "Delicacy!" he exclaimed with infinite scorn. "I'm not ashamed of what I eat. If I am always hungry at

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meal-times, what the deuce has that to do with Barrie? Hang it all, a man's food is his private affair." I said he was too sensitive, and told him the anecdote of Lord Melbourne, who objected to religion when it invaded the sanctity of private life. But he would not be comforted. "I don't want to go to the theatre to be preached at about my appetite. Nice thing to have people in your box guying you between the acts!" Then it came out that his prowess at the table was the theme of innocent diversion to his friends. No wonder he was shy of "Little Mary"!

In the old days, when English muscle was built up with beef and venison pasty, the stout trencherman exulted in his achievements. But now he is touchy. He resents advice, except from his doctor, and seldom acts on that. If you are at table with him, and make a playful allusion to the capacity of the organ, you run the risk of making an enemy. Figure, then, the peril of Mr. Barrie! Lewis Carroll described the man who came down to breakfast at afternoon tea, and dined on the following day. This was a gentle hint to epicures; but it was supposed to be a gibe at absence of mind. Mr. Barrie, disdaining circuitous strategy, makes a frontal attack on

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the organ. He has noticed that the class from which our rulers are chiefly drawn eats too much, that the public service suffers accordingly, that the War Office makes a dreadful mess, that with incessant deglutition we are sinking to decay. The medical profession writes prescriptions; and once a year the organ visits Homburg. These are fashionable palliatives which do not touch the evil. Having shown that, to make a proper use of the national brain-power society must be reconstructed by the elevation of Bill Crichton to the House of Lords, Mr. Barrie now proposes to put our governing bodies on a regimen. "Quarter rations for the aristocracy!" is the motto of this stern reformer. I explained all this in guarded terms to my leisured friend. "Oh yes," said he, "I see what the fellow's driving at. Do you know there's a peer in this play who marries a female quack? And all because she converts him to a snack at noon and six o'clock tea! No dinner for the peerage!"

I suggested that Mr. Barrie might be induced to mitigate the rigour of this treatment. Take my own diet; coffee and two thin slices of bread and butter at eight-thirty; glass of milk and a buttered scone at midday; piece

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of plum-cake and a bottle of ginger-ale at half-past one; tea and two pieces of dry toast at five; and at 8 P.M. the modest club dinner at three shillings, with juice of the grape at thirteenpence. "In these simple repasts," I urged, "there is nought that tempts the organ to grossness, with the possible exception of blackberry and apple pudding, which is frequent at this season. Mr. Barrie might frown upon that; he might say that in blackberry and apple pudding there lurked the seeds of national decadence. Peers, he might point out, would be sure to eat too many of them; and puddings, tied up with red tape, would always be boiling at the War Office. We might compromise on an allowance of two blackberry and apple puddings per head for ordinary Government servants in the month of September, and three for Ministers, except during the reconstruction of a Cabinet. In a war they might hamper operations in the field, and would therefore be prohibited by special Army Order." My friend gazed at me with stupefaction. "Thirteen penn'orth of liquor," he murmured, "must be made of blackberries, like the pudding! Glass of milk! Buttered scone! Why, man, you must suffer infernally

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from——” “Organache? Oh dear, no! I have not seen a doctor for two years, and I have the clearest ideas as to the true greatness of my country.” He turned away, still muttering, “Buttered scone!” and I did not deem it prudent to tell him that, when the Constitution is suspended during the enactment of Mr. Barrie’s ideas, a Committee of Public Safety will enforce my diet by a house-to-house visitation through the West End.

A modern philosopher has painted in dazzling colours the destiny of the human race. He is not of those who think that the nature of man is incapable of change, and that he will be a predatory and gormandising animal to the last syllable of recorded time. Nor is this philosopher discouraged by the scientific pundits, who warn us that the sun is in a decline, that his benevolent glory will one day be turned to a cinder, that our planet will become a waste of glaciers, and the last man, making his last journey on snow-shoes in desperate search of a meal, will perish miserably. The philosopher smiles serenely at that picture. There will be no last man. Long before the sun is cold, man will have ceased to be human, as we under-

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stand humanity. He will have transcended the fleshly envelope, which is now sensitive to heat, and frost, and privation; he will still be man, and no angel, but he will be no more of this planet in particular than of any other; he will turn his back, if he pleases, on the solar system, and roam untrammelled through the universe. What his diet will be under such conditions I cannot conjecture; but it is clear that he will not be a slave of the organ. The organ, indeed, will be abolished or translated. If man does not live on air, the chameleon's dish, he will have some nutriment quite beyond our present notions of cookery.

Incalculable ages must pass before this ideal is accomplished; but, as the philosopher I am reverently quoting does not cease to impress upon us, it is the duty of every generation to take care that a better generation shall follow. That, you may depend, is the moral of Mr. Barrie's play. He bids his own generation take heed that there are at least five enemies of progress which must be combated, if not subdued; and their names are breakfast, luncheon, tea, dinner, and supper, to say nothing of that insidious fowl, and that bottle of claret, in the watches of the night.

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By slow but patient effort we must do our best to conquer them, feeling assured that an infinitely remote generation will appreciate our efforts when the sun is at last extinct, and the Organ is no more.

XXXII—*M' Bonus*

AS a man of moods, my friend M' Bonus is without an equal in my experience. He has the sober qualities of the prosperous British merchant and the model husband and father ; but there is a side of him that contradicts this steadfastness with capricious humour. In a different skin, and under another sky, he would have been one of those captivating vagabonds who allow themselves to be tamed for a while at an outpost of civilisation, and then lapse into the desert without warning. In London he betrays his incurable restlessness by taking houses, always under the earnest pretence that they suit him exactly, and that he desires nothing better than to live in them until the last pulsation of old age. I remember a charming flat, where he was quartered for about three months. "A real home," he called it in the early days ; then it became "that confounded place where you were always meeting funny people on the stairs." This peculiarity is a source of infinite diversion to his friends, who lay wagers at his table about the next migration ; and the oddest thing of all is that

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Mrs. M'Bonus, with the most singular sense of humour I have ever seen in woman, shows an untiring appreciation of the joke.

How many Londoners who pass their lives in the monotony of terraces must envy this reputable nomad! Do what you will, there is something about a terrace that stamps itself on the human character, and I have often thought that after many centuries, when our streets are buried in strata, geologists will say that we belonged to the Terrace Age, just as we speak superciliously of generations that tried to make both ends meet in paleolithic times. There is no trace of the terrace in M'Bonus. When, like a butterfly, he alights on a house that chances to be in a row, he proceeds at once to give it a startling personality. To his present hearth and home, formerly the property of an eccentric nobleman, he has added the novelty of a tradesman's entrance. The prim gravity of the interior has been broken up into recesses, where the butler, who has a travelled air, as of one who has seen many domiciles, and doesn't believe in them, marshals bottles behind screens, and doubtless speculates as to the next flitting. To be sure, there is very little room; but M'Bonus, in the enthusiastic stage, has visions of a time when

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the children (now thriving at Eastbourne) will grow to be majestic young women; and then, hey, presto! partitions will vanish, and next-door will contribute its share of a substantial mansion, with architectural devices that will astonish the street.

Give him time, and I believe my friend would end by transforming London! When Darwin published his work on earth-worms, we were not a little surprised to learn that the real business of these unobtrusive creatures was not to wriggle on fishing-hooks, but to digest the crust of the earth for the general benefit. Imagine the excitement of a future age when science disclosed that M' Bonus had lived in so many London streets, removed so many partitions, and changed so many façades, so that our metropolis was his re-creation! In the light of such fame, who would care to talk of Wren or Inigo Jones? This dream passes through my mind while the rest of the company are moving Mrs. M' Bonus to gentle laughter by painting her utter distraction between the house in town and the house at Eastbourne. "You will travel up and down the line," says one humorist, "with a season ticket until the fatal morning when the claims of the children on your maternal heart, and

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the claims of William M'Bonus on your wifely affection, will be so nicely balanced that you will stick at a station midway, unable to move in either direction, with your arms extended like a semaphore, one towards Eastbourne and the other towards London; and there you will remain without bite or sup; and the evening papers will have sympathetic headlines—'Sad Dilemma of a Wife and Mother: Torn to Pieces by Conflicting Duties'—and the morning papers will offer prizes for the best solution of a problem that is breaking the nation's heart!"

Now, my friend's pride in his children, which is very great, is chastened, I sometimes think, by a secret alarm. Every thoughtful father must wonder rather dubiously whether his offspring, when they grow up, will approve his views of life. Heredity so seldom extends even to such ordinary mental baggage as political opinions and a taste in literature, that it can scarcely be expected to sustain an extraordinary habit of folding the family tent and stealing over the map of London. Those babes at Eastbourne (I call them babes, because they are not yet in their teens) already have a lively outlook on the world. To Miss Molly M'Bonus, when she was about four, I entrusted the rem-

nant of a battered heart, which she has made light of ever since. With what a pang I listen to her father's tales of her precocious humour—so rare because it retains the unspoilt charm of childhood! "Your pal," he is good enough to call her on these occasions; but whilst I am honoured by the compliment—so alien, alas! from the reality—I can see he has an uneasy sense that, before that clear-sighted young judge, we may both be in the dock at any moment. He wants to say to me, I know, "She must have found you out already; that isn't difficult; but do you think she suspects that the Post-Office Directory is chiefly occupied with my changes of address?"

When you think of it, there is something rather moving in this spectacle of two middle-aged men so apprehensive of a child's keen insight. I have noticed that M' Bonus, whose great delight it is at this season to take his children to the pantomime, has delegated that task to one of his brothers. This showed a poor confidence in me; but I let that pass. Uncle Frank appears to have had an exciting time at the Hippodrome. At one point of the entertainment a dumb servitor, charged with a message from some choleric person, wrote on a blackboard with a piece of chalk the letter

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"D." Then was heard the singularly clear and penetrating soprano of Miss Molly M'Bonus, "Uncle Frank, what does 'D' mean?" This was embarrassing, for many heads were promptly turned that way, and seemed to await the answer with the liveliest interest. Swiftly reviewing the orthodox possibilities of "D," Uncle Frank perceived the futility of Dormouse or Dromedary, and took refuge in silence. Then turning to the nearest perfect stranger, Miss Molly M'Bonus touched him on the arm, and said in her silvery tones, "Uncle Frank won't say what 'D' means. Will you be so kind as to tell us?" Blushing confusion of the nearest perfect stranger, and unmeasured joy of all the other perfect strangers within earshot!

When I heard this story I taxed M'Bonus with the evasion of his parental duty. He was highly pleased with himself, for he had taken his mother, a beautiful little old lady with snowy hair and the complexion of a milkmaid, to dine at a fashionable restaurant, where she was the envy of all the professional beauties of the hour. "Bless you!" said he, "do you think I am going to a pantomime with your pal? How am I to know that some acrobatic fugitive would not jump through one window and out at another? And what would she say

to that? She might say, in a voice perfectly audible all over the house, 'That's what papa does!' A nice figure I should cut in the presence of my countrymen!" I admitted the possibility that his migratory aptitude might be shown up in this fashion, although the pantomime of to-day is not so rich as it used to be in side-lights on our private affairs. But I begged him to consider whether it was worth while to persist in the task of transforming London, into which he had insensibly drifted, when this might have an unfavourable aspect to his progeny. "Why wait," I said, "until they are majestic young women? Why not pull down that partition at once, lots of partitions, and occupy the whole street, but pause there?" It is sound advice; but who can cure a nomad?

XXXIII—*The Holiday Mood*

TO have the holiday mood without the holiday: that is a state of mind which breeds malice or a gentle irony, according to your disposition.

There are persons in this humour who, when they learned that Euston was thronged with sportsmen going North for the Twelfth, turned to a paragraph of the daily paper headed "Grouse Prospects," and read with ferocious gusto that the prospects were considered bad, that the birds had pneumonia, or some malady which made it unlikely that they would be "strong on the wing." Being no sportsman, I take this to mean that the grouse, until now a most foolish bird, understands at last that the Twelfth is the day of doom for his kind, and is lying low, like Brer Rabbit. This lesson in evolution should cheer the housekeeper who waits in vain for that inviting placard at the poulterer's, "Grouse is Cheap To-day." Is not life, indeed, one incessant lesson in adaptiveness? Visitors to the sea, I am told, shiver on the brink, and fear to launch away. The unseasonable chill in the temperature makes the bathing-machine

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a deserted tenement. I take this news with philosophy, for has not my editor gone to Dieppe? He is a resourceful man, and I should be sorry to hazard a doubt as to his capacity for adaptiveness. But as he paces the shore, and gazes pensively at Kingsley's cruel, crawling foam (Ruskin objected that foam was neither cruel nor crawling, but it may be too cold for even the most venturesome toe), I should like him to think of me sporting in the brine of the morning bath. (For particulars consult advertisements of sea-salt.)

Are there no holiday haunts in town? Must we roam far from the pavement that mothers us before we can throw off the burden of daily cares? I should not be surprised to hear that the spectacle of the Beefeaters on Coronation Day has prompted many footsteps in the direction of the Tower. The tourist agents would never admit it, but I have a suspicion that the Paris hotelkeepers are the poorer for the attractions of Paris at the Earl's Court Exhibition. If you find the Tower too heavy, or Earl's Court too light; if you crave for mountain scenery, the foaming torrent, the picturesqueness of life in the Tyrol — well, there's the Hippodrome! I say the waters do

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not come down at Lodore with more riotous energy than they show on Mr. Moss's stage, when they burst a mill-dam, and whirl to destruction horsemen, a coach and four, and a bridge in that arena which a few minutes before was a peaceful cycle-track. No mere illusion, mark you; none of your theatrical panoramas. There's a soldier swimming for his life. He was shot just now by a bandit, and though the bullet did him no harm he was pitched from his horse into the flood. The youngsters who watch him with round eyes can swear to that. Granted that the duel to the death between Count Antonio and his wicked brother, the brigand chief, is a trifle tame. But there is no mistake about the torrent, which sweeps the struggling horsemen right through the circus to some comfortable haven out of sight, where, I hope, they are rapidly dried and provided with suitable refreshments.

Consider now that if you took an actual journey to the Tyrol, this is precisely what you would not see. There would be no brigand chief abducting his brother's bride in her coach and four, no jealous lady of his acquaintance brandishing a knife without any danger to the bystanders. You can have these

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violent delights by staying in town ; moreover, you can gratify the junior members of your household to an unheard-of degree. On the point of economy I should say it was cheaper to take them to the Hippodrome twice a week than to take them to the seaside for a fortnight. I put this to a matron whose excited little brood had watched the careering waters with a joy which cannot be painted in prose or verse. "Yes," she said, "but I am uneasy about Freddy; he is so full of ideas. He would think nothing of turning on the taps in the bath-room to make a cataract on the stairs." "No fun in that!" said Freddy scornfully. "If I could turn on all the water in the street, that would be something like. Wouldn't the old cab-horses jump! Don't you see the bobbies swimming about! Perhaps they can't swim. That would be larks!" "What did I tell you?" said his mother, looking at me. "This excitement is not good for Freddy. Now the seaside always calms him." "Donkey-rides!" murmured Freddy in a tone of disgust. "I like donkey-rides," said his small sister. He proceeded to point out to her the absurdity of craving for that animal when you might have the ecstasy of being swept away on

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horseback by the bursting of a mill-dam, to say nothing of a lively fusillade from bandits.

Meanwhile, I reminded his mamma that some parts of the Hippodrome programme were quite as soothing as the seaside. There was the performance of a young gentleman in an Eton suit who calls himself Chinko. He came on the stage with an umbrella and a portmanteau. Scene: the playing fields of Eton; distant view of the College. The holidays have begun, and Master Chinko is thinking of some gaiety in town, possibly a music-hall. He tosses the umbrella, and catches it in the air. Up goes the portmanteau; his hat joins the eccentric flight; he juggles deftly with all three. Warming to this innocent and graceful accomplishment, he takes off his coat, and juggles with plates which are handy on a table tastefully spread for luncheon. "I will now juggle with nine billiard-balls," he says, "a trick never before attempted." Up they go in graceful curves, and the Muses Nine and other branches of learning at Eton are put out of countenance. "Surely this is good for Freddy," I remarked to the young hopeful's mother. "Not billiards," said she, frowning. "Possibly not,"

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I conceded. "I am no player, for I have heard that the game consumes a vast amount of time and tobacco in poorly ventilated rooms. But if Freddy can keep nine billiard-balls in the air, why should he trouble himself with the inferior art of knocking them about a table? And what an inducement to exhibit his charming dexterity to a few admiring guests in the domestic circle?"

Yes, I should like to impress these home-like joys upon citizens who are sighing after foreign casinos. At the Hippodrome I retrieved the beatitude of childhood when docile steeds pranced to the music, and Mlle. Ella Bradna performed those equestrian feats which live in the romance of our earliest memories. We change the fashion of our drama, and heroines have notions and experiences that would be incredible to a bygone generation. But that fair image on the back of the circus horse remains untouched by years, as I observed to Freddy's mother, who thought it was a foolish sentiment at my time of life. The ring-master is still the ideal of politeness, with the habit of repeating everything that is said to him, as if to give it the hall-mark of dignity; and the Fratellini Brothers have all the spontaneous farce of the sawdust, which is

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so much droller than any other farce. What better holiday for the dramatic critic than to watch these clowns, whose humours call for no subtle analysis? What more restful sight for the leader-writer than the Sisters Klos, suspended in graceful festoons, two of them swinging on the slim and shapely arm of the third? Why is it that the male gymnast, who is advertised as a "gladiatorial marvel," is an unsightly apparatus of muscle, whereas the Sisters Klos seem no more muscular than languid lilies? One of them carries the others hanging from her teeth; and yet the shape of her jaw, I rejoice to say, belies this singular vigour. These mysteries offer gentle exercise to the mind of the man of letters after months of fatiguing research.

It may not sting the bosom of the sportsman to know that Mlle. Bradna has a pretty trick of firing a gun as a signal for a flight of tame pigeons, which come circling round her head. But I did not fail to note that this was good for Freddy. "Better for him to be here," I said to his mother, "than in any of those Continental watering-places where pigeon-shooting is a pastime." I have convinced that excellent lady, in short, that the only

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reasonable and moral place for a holiday is this diversified wilderness that we live in, and I cannot see why we should not all hold the same opinion until we have a decent opportunity of backsliding.

XXXIV—*The Art of Small Talk*

I SEE that a journal which stirs the feminine mind is appealing for a “useful little handbook of short conversations suitable for certain occasions when speech fails.” Surely there are already little handbooks for this purpose; but I thought they were designed for the use of diffident man. It is quite a new idea that woman, before setting out for the ball, dinner-party, picnic, or whatever may be the scene of conquest, would take a last nervous peep into a manual of small talk, if she had one handy. Can you imagine her arriving breathless, and hastily taking counsel with a friend in the ladies’ cloak-room? “Oh, my dear! do tell me what is the correct thing to say when a man mentions the weather. He will say, ‘Rather showery lately.’ ‘Yes,’ I say, and then I shall say, ‘But I suppose we must expect showers in April.’ Yes, yes, I’ve got it now. I do hope I shan’t forget it, though!”

Does woman’s native speech, does her natural wit fail so lamentably that she wants a pocket-mentor, in red morocco, to coach

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her in this fashion? Go to! When she is in the mood for talk, she needs no prompter; and when she is silent, she has her reasons. Flashes of silence are very becoming when there are lots of things, including mischief, lurking under very pretty eyelashes.

But when a man is silent, it is usually because he is feeling rather stupid. What is he to say to this bright young creature, who looks at him with a critical air? In the old days, when girls were prim and insipid, and quite thankful for the smallest attention from the august male, there was no particular strain upon his intellects. You could get a sequestration for humour then by quoting Dundreary's sprightly remarks to the lady he took in to dinner. "Does your sister like cheese? Does your brother wag his left ear?" I have seen a whole table convulsed by that artless fun. To be sure, it was at Christmas-time in the long, long ago, and we were pulling crackers, and even finding mirth in the venerable riddles that wrapped up the sugar-plums. "Why is a bald head like heaven? Because it is all shining and no parting." What fond memories that awakens! But would you venture to try it now on the damsel who

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is still regarding you with the look that says, "I don't think you are very amusing, though you mean well!"

Dr. Carl Peters, who has written a friendly book about us, complains that in English society people will never discuss anything. But small talk is not discussion. You must steer clear of fate, pre-knowledge, free-will, and the fiscal question. "Many topics will be suggested by the *menu*," writes a lady who has thought the matter out. "The fish reminds you of the sea. If it should be salmon, there is Scotland, and you can talk about Holyrood, and Mary Queen of Scots," Oh, can you! With the sort of young woman I have in my eye, you had better not. But glancing down the *menu*, you perceive asparagus. Now, here's a chance. You can talk about asparagus, its incomparable flavour, its costliness, the lamentable shortness of its season, till your eyelids can no longer wag, as Mr. H. B. Irving says at the Adelphi Theatre.

Ten to one the lady, too, is an enthusiast. All women are fond of asparagus, despite the difficulty of eating it with grace. Your companion eats it like an artist, and you tender warm congratulations. You draw her

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attention to the performance of a neighbour who holds a stick of asparagus in the air and rises to it like a trout to a fly. Then you touch the pathos of this vegetable. Day and night! how expensive it is! Why is there so little of it? Why is its stay so brief? (You must not make these questions too audible, or your host will think you are accusing him of stinginess.) Then you look the girl in the eye and murmur, "But this is not the worst. They say asparagus is full of rheumatism. So are green peas. No diet, I hear, is absolutely safe except Brazil nuts." You will have done pretty well so far, and may do better still if your partner is disposed to talk at large about ailments. If not—if, as I suspect, she is full of health and high spirits, you will have come to no great harm by showing her how rheumatism lurks among the kindly fruits of the earth. Why, they say it is even in strawberries! You can mention that at dessert, and remark that the early strawberries one sees in shop windows are priced at eighteenpence apiece! You may ask her if she has ever noticed the advertisement of "peach-fed hams." Just think of it—pigs fed on peaches! In America, of course. And here

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a decent peach may cost you half-a-crown!
Pigs, indeed!

Of anecdote, perhaps, it is well to be chary. It is idle to say that women have no sense of humour; but they have a great many prepossessions which may blind them to the point of your best story. Now, if this very charming girl to whom you have talked so successfully as far as the dessert, chances to have ecclesiastical leanings, of which you know nothing, would it be quite discreet to tell her the tale of the Archbishop's parrot? The Archbishop of Canterbury told it to Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff, who relates it in his "Diary." At Lambeth Palace a few years ago there was a parrot, carefully brought up by a chaplain. It lived in the Archbishop's study; and when there was a Pan-Anglican Conference, and colonial bishops called at Lambeth, the parrot looked at them fixedly, and remarked to them in turn, "You are an ass!" It would be unpleasant to see the face which had smiled at your "peach-fed hams" turn suddenly cold, and to learn afterwards that one of those colonial bishops was the lady's uncle.

Anecdotes have another danger. One is apt to tell them with too much animation.

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I remember a tea-party which was fearfully depressed by a Hungarian gentleman, who revelled in the English tongue, which he spoke with the fluency possible only to the foreigner. The native is seldom fluent, and never at tea-time. Our Hungarian talked freely of Shakespeare, knowing him by heart, and gave us a sketch of Italian acting, which he declared to be the best in the world, with imitations of the leading Italian actors in their great parts. By this time we were paralysed, and he finished us off by enacting the dramatic scene in which he had dismissed the English governess of his small son. "Dear miss," he said to her, "you do not know enough English to teach my boy. You know only four hundred words." The company looked helplessly at one another, as who should say, "How many do *we* know? This terrible man will smother us with words!" His huge discourse, you see, was not small talk.

I have one or two thrilling adventures of my own, which I narrate to congenial ears. One of them is the rescue of an Oriental magnate from a gambling haunt in a Continental watering-place. The point of the story is that he had several thousands of pounds about his person, and that as he was

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very drunk, he would have lost everything if I hadn't dragged him out. Unluckily, I tried this drama one day on a lady at lunch. It was too big for the scene, and it ended, I fear, by convincing the table that I was a dangerous character.

Beware of animation, then, and let your small talk be really small. A young friend of mine, who has a natural gift of pleasing, was much disturbed to find himself unpopular with chaperones. "Hang it all!" he says, "I can't be pleasant to a girl without her people thinking I am making love to her." "Perhaps she is of that opinion, too," I suggest. "Stuff!" says he. "I just rattle on to amuse her. But what do you think the elder sister of one of these girls said to me? I was just beginning with her in the middle of a dance, you know, when she said, 'That will do, thank you. We'll dance, please, and not talk.'" "She was afraid of your blarney," I remark. Needless to say, my young friend is Irish. "Small talk, my son, was invented to keep girls from falling in love with the wrong man. You are not playing the game." So I have written this article mainly for his benefit.

XXXV—*At Brighton*

I AM never at Brighton without feeling that its oldest associations cry aloud for redress. It is one of those haunts of bygone manners which should be modernised as little as possible. The municipality ought to consist of antiquaries, bent on preserving, not old buildings merely, but also the particular note of fashion which made the place famous a century ago. If I were Mayor of Brighton I should wear a wig running over with little brown curls, such as adorned the head of the Prince Regent—Prinny of the Pavilion—making innocent little boys and girls (see contemporary memoirs) believe that they were real.

And I should call a public meeting at the Pavilion, and explain to my fellow-townsmen the duty of showing our respect for the really immortal part of Brighton by outward and visible symbols. "It is no use," I should say, "talking about the modern spirit here. There is no twentieth century for Brighton; we belong to the Regency. We may think no small beer of ourselves; but let me tell you that the illustrious figures of the past have longer

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lives than ours. It is we, not they, who are shadows. We play our little parts in our prosy way, and then vanish, and are no more seen ; but they linger here for ever.

“Yes, my friends ; I never pass through Old Steyne without seeing a carriage, and footmen wearing the scarlet liveries of royalty, and a stately lady stepping in or out ; and I know it is Mrs. Fitzherbert, of all the injured women in history, perhaps the only one who was truly a saint in her injuries. Yesterday she granted me an interview. I gather from sounds at the back of the hall that some of you don’t believe that. Well, it is far more real to me than this meeting. And, although I am Mayor of Brighton, let me say that a public meeting in this Pavilion, consecrated by tradition to wine, woman, and song, is a profanity which only the dire necessities of my office force me to sanction.

“Well, Mrs. Fitzherbert was gracious enough to speak to me. She beckoned me to the carriage-door, and said, ‘Mr. Mayor, I must congratulate you.’ ‘Madam,’ I said, ‘to what do I owe this felicity?’ ‘To your wig, Mr. Mayor,’ said she ; ‘it reminds me of—of——’ She seemed to be struggling with emotion. ‘Of Prinny, madam,’ I suggested. ‘I beg

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your pardon. I should not speak of his Royal Highness—I mean his late Majesty—with such unseemly familiarity.’ ‘Oh, pray do, Mr. Mayor!’ she said; ‘it sounds friendly. Poor George had his faults, and I am afraid that people think only of those when they think of him at all.’

“‘Madam,’ I said, ‘I think of his late Majesty very often. As Mayor of Brighton I consider this my official duty. But for his constant patronage we should have been no better than a fishing village. Before my term of office expires I shall have persuaded the town, I hope, to pay a lasting tribute to his memory.’ ‘You have begun well, Mr. Mayor,’ said she, glancing at my wig. ‘You must go on, I do not say you must wear his clothes, for your figure is scarcely——’ ‘I know, madam, I know. His was Portly!’ ‘Don’t be discouraged, Mr. Mayor,’ she went on with that gentle kindness for which she was so justly beloved. ‘No man could dress like my husband. Even when we were so poor that we had not five pounds between us, his brain was busily designing new waistcoats.’

“‘Madam,’ I said, ‘the poor Mayor of Brighton cannot emulate such genius.’ ‘But you can wear more befitting garments than

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these, Mr. Mayor,' she remonstrated, pointing to the wretched costume in which a man of our time, even a mayor, goes about his daily business. At that moment I took a great resolution. 'I pledge you my word, madam,' I declared solemnly, 'that for your sake, for Prinny's—I mean his late Majesty's—sake, and for the sake of Brighton, I shall dress like a Regency buck!'

"My friends, I have called this meeting to take you into my confidence—the first duty of a public man. You cannot think that our present mode of dress is worthy of our historic associations. It is ugly and it is meaningless. I go into the hall of the Hôtel Métropole, and I see a big man with a white bowler hat at the back of his head, and a coffee-coloured overcoat. What is he! Some gentleman says, 'Bookie!' You are wrong, sir; he is an Irish peer. But how is one to tell that from his dress, which has no character, either of the peerage or of Ireland? A green coat, now, a fancy waistcoat sprigged with shamrock, and an Irish harp with a coronet on it as a scarf-pin, would give us some clue at least to his nationality and his position in society.

"I must tell you quite frankly that I mean

At Brighton

to wear a blue coat, a flowered waistcoat, a large stock adorned with a meandering rivulet of gold chain, to signify my office ; pale orange trousers, hessian boots, and a beaver hat. In the few agitated hours that have passed since my interview with Mrs. Fitzherbert, this simple costume is all I have been able to devise. There are many among you, I have no doubt, who will easily surpass it in richness and originality. Some gentleman says, 'Oh no!' He is too modest.

"Let me call your particular attention to the beaver hat with a rolling brim. You do not see it now, except in old prints, or when a hatter puts one in his window as a curiosity. I am told that in some rural districts, where everybody is ten miles from a railway station, a beaver hat of degenerate shape is sometimes seen on the head of a farmer. But think of the Regency beaver, and then of the hat we wear now—a perfect nonentity of a hat! It may do in London, where, I believe, they call it a tile. The heads of Londoners are roofed with commonplace tiles. But in Brighton we should wear something that consorts with our character and station in history; and that is the beaver.

"Yet do not run away with the idea that,

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after all, this is a matter of opinion, and every man must choose according to his natural gifts. By no means! We cannot have our beavers and our hessians guyed by a mob too indolent or too captious to follow our example. Women may wear what they please; I am not so rash as to dictate to them. But I propose that no man shall be allowed to ruffle it in the King's Road, on the sea-front, or in any hotel, save in the costume of the Regency. Call this tyranny if you please; but you will live to be grateful to the tyrant, and to raise monuments in his honour."

This is the speech I should make if I were Mayor of Brighton. The present holder of the office is welcome to the idea. Let him use it without acknowledgment, and I shall not complain. He may have a little trouble with people who talk about the liberty of the subject—a foolish phrase. I am all for liberty in its proper concerns: Parliamentary elections, leading articles, and similar trifles; but costume should be governed by artistic fitness, and this can be enforced only by a benevolent despotism.

Besides, the neglect of Prinny's memory in Brighton is a scandal.

XXXVI—*Detained in Gout-land*

AN American orator is said to have described his native country as bounded on the north by the Aurora Borealis, on the south by the gates of Hell, on the east by the Garden of Eden, and on the west by the Day of Judgment.

The boundaries of Gout-land are not so magnificent. Its few square feet (all of them gouty) may be traversed with a hop and a skip. But you do not hop unless you have gout in one foot; when it is in both you lie on your back, and muse upon a neglected line in Shakespeare. What did Launcelot Gobbo mean when he read in the palm of his hand that he was to be in peril of his life by the edge of a feather bed? Don't you see? Launcelot was to be laid up with the gout, the fruit of high living in the servants' hall at Belmont when Bassanio married Portia. Peeping over the edge of the bed in a lonely attic, forgotten by the household in the wassail that went on for weeks after the nuptials, the gouty cripple may well have shuddered at the thought of chasms, precipices, and other perilous descents.

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So the first advantage of gout in both feet to any studious person is a new illumination in Shakespearean criticism ! Let Mr. Sidney Lee note that.

And not only is gout a stimulus to thoughtful inquiry ; it braces the nerve for adventure. Your feet fret each other like a pair of ill-matched horses ; twin-brethren they should be, and yet they fight for the pillow at the end of the bed, lodged there to do them ease. In the fratricidal strife, a book goes over the precipice ; or a copy of the *Morning Leader* flutters down, looking in that dizzy gulf like edelweiss to the Alpine climber.

As you gaze at it, you are inspired by a great resolve. Those quarrelsome feet emerge sullenly from their lair ; they tremble in space ; you slide slowly down the precipitous face of the cliff ; you hang for one wild moment by your elbows on the edge ; and then—then a considerable bump, and lo ! you are on the rolling prairie, waving the *Morning Leader* in triumph.

There is a description in Pope of Camilla, a very agile lady, whose movements were so swift that she was said to scour the plain. You are scouring the plain too, so far as friction goes (note for Pope's next editor : Was

Detained in Gout-land

Camilla a housemaid ?) ; but you are doing it in a slow and stately manner.

On the other side of the plain is the Bell, placed by some infinite wisdom as remote as may be from your hand. Once in touch with the Bell, you can summon the Minion, who has forgotten something ; milk for your tea, salt for your fish—a thousand and one things are forgotten by the Minion. You think luxuriously of the wingéd words you will let fly when you see him. Gout is a great begger of words that fizzle in the air like little blue flames. So, with a fierce and panting joy, you make for the Bell.

You hear its unconsecrated summons rattling in an upper storey ; then you recross the plain with some haste.

There are two motives for this. Somewhere about the middle (the spot ought to be marked by a mournful effigy—say, a prostrate gladiator with a broken sword) you are exposed to scrutiny from without. Any neighbour who casts a wandering eye through his window (a murrain on him for an idle rogue !) perceives a white and agitated figure on its beam-ends, and greets the spectacle with a broad smile. The other motive for haste is fear lest the Minion should come before you have regained that

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dignified retreat, wherein you can launch at him mandate and anathema.

You clamber up the precipice backwards (putting the Alpine Club to shame); you dig your way up with desperate elbows, the gouty feet protesting with violent twinges; and you are safe at last, just as the door opens, and the Minion receives a little blue flame right in the eye.

He reminds you of portraits of old tragedians—Junius Brutus Booth more particularly; there is the same overhanging brow, the gleaming eyeball, the uplifted hair, as of one who has regular converse with the Ghost of Hamlet senior. Add to all this the tragedy of a man under a curse. Imagine young Hamlet, not doubtful about his mission, not irresolute, but simply forgetting it. “Behold in me,” says the face of the Minion, “the Doomed Forgetter of the Thousand-and-One. What is it this time, O Knight of the Burning Feet? Ha! the milk!”

The prevailing sense of doom in Gout-land (you feel that your feet will fight for that pillow for ever and ever, as the Lion and the Unicorn fight for the Crown) turns your mind to the old Elizabethan dramatists. I never open them at any other time; but now their

Detained in Gout-land

horrors have a soothing fitness ; it is positively appetising to read the fifth act where everybody sets to and dies violently.

Shakespeare is much too tame ; give me Webster and Ford. Here be poisonings, i' faith ! What think you of anointing the surface of a picture, so that when a lady kisses it dutifully ('tis the portrait of her husband) she is taken off straight ? Or of poisoning the lining of a gentleman's hat, so that when he puts it on he complains at once that his brain is on fire ? The fair and faithless Julia, swearing she will not reveal the Cardinal's secret, though there is a cavalier in hiding who is to hear everything, kisses the book, and dies on the instant. Poison and perjury—there's nothing like it !

The stage-directions in Ford are especially toothsome. This, for instance : "Enter Giovanni with the Heart of Annabella on a Dagger." There is a dinner-party going on ; and dying sets in at once with great briskness. I am wild to write a play wherein the most stirring scene shall be heralded thus : "Enter the Minion with two Gouty Feet on a Tray."

But my chief delight is Nero in the old play which has come down to us with no author's name ; Nero, the actor, who ordered the theatre

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doors to be guarded when he was on the stage to prevent any bored playgoer from escaping, so that some men fell down and pretended to be dead ; Nero, inspecting a list of rash personages who frowned or looked sad at his acting, or went to sleep, and thus signed their own death-warrants. Mr. Stephen Phillips, I trust, will not omit this characteristic of the Roman Emperor, who, when about to die, exclaimed, "How great an artist is lost in me !"

Such are the recreations of Gout-land. Think yourself happy if you ever take a holiday there ; say a matter of three weeks. You dream o' nights that you are trying to leave before the fall of the curtain on Nero, but your feet won't let you.

And in the morning comes a cheery letter from an old friend, who writes : "Gout is a capital thing for keeping off other ailments ; as long as you have it, you need not fear dyspepsia, typhus, and blood-poisoning."

Blood-poisoning ! Ha ! You get all you want of that from Webster and Ford.

THE END

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